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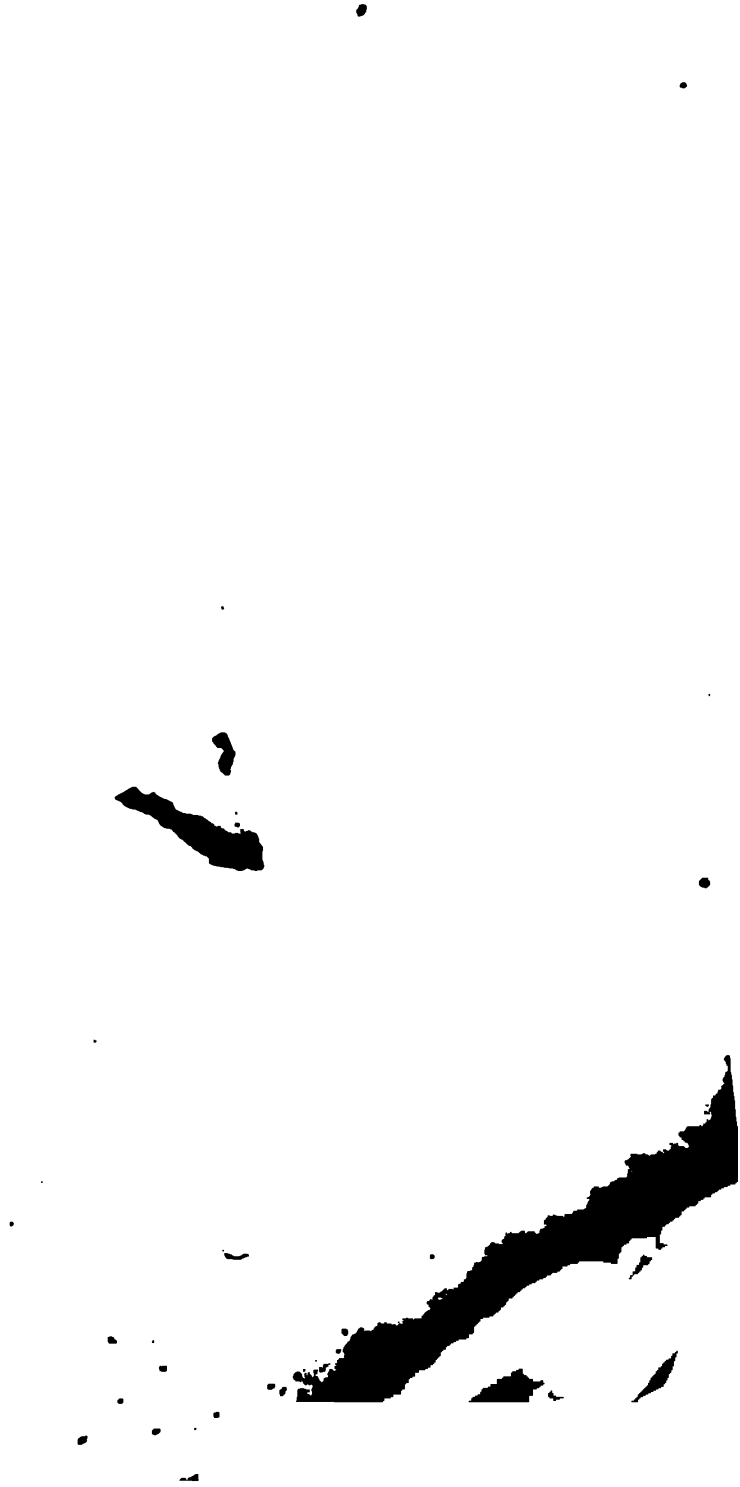

MEMOIRS

AND

SELECT REMAINS

OF

THE LATE REV. JOHN COOKE,

Forty-three years Pastor of the Independent Church, Maidenhead, Berks.

By GEORGE REDFORD, M.A.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

A BOOK without a preface, is liable to be looked upon as a stranger entering company *without a bow*. There is a propriety and decency in the custom of prefacing our public appearances with an explanation or apology, in which I should be pained to be thought deficient. Still I have little to say, by way of introducing this book, distinct from the book itself. To the public in general, I know not that I ought to attempt to say anything further, or in any way endeavour to influence their judgment, either concerning myself, or the eminent man, whose life and character I have endeavoured faithfully to describe. What I have done, as an Author, and as an Editor in preparing this volume, I have done to the best of my ability; and though I cannot feel indifferent to the reception of the work, yet, as my chief anxiety has been to make it, my highest reward will be to find it, subservient to utility.

To Mr. Cooke's numerous friends, however, some explanation may be due, of the long delay which has taken place. When I undertook, at the solicitation of his Executors, to prepare a Memoir of Mr. Cooke, and to examine his papers, I was not at all aware of the amazing mass of writings, which it would be necessary to peruse, both for the purposes of information and selection. I entered upon the task with pleasure and hope. Though not unused to toil for the press, I was in this instance greatly mistaken, as to the facility with which I should execute the work. In labour and responsibility it has far exceeded my expectations. Had not Mr. Cooke's manuscripts possessed peculiar interest,—had they not been distinguished, as religious compositions, by great spirituality and discrimination; and, as writings, by unusual *point* and *pith*,—I should certainly have wearied of the task I had undertaken. But I can sincerely affirm, that though the perusal alone occupied many months of diligent reading and examination, my pleasure increased as I proceeded: and though I had known Mr. Cooke intimately for about five and twenty years, yet his manuscripts greatly increased my knowledge of his character, and my admiration of his unusual excellences. My labour has been considerable; sometimes, amidst other numerous engagements, even *oppressive*, but it has been fully and pleasantly counterbalanced by the improvement

and gratification I have derived from my work. May many readers find the perusal of these "Remains," as interesting and profitable as it has been to myself! And, in that case, I shall never regret the time and attention bestowed upon the selection and arrangement.

Amidst so considerable an accumulation, and so great a variety of brief papers, I have often felt the difficulty of choice; and not unfrequently, the responsibility of determining what was, and what was not, *original*. Mr. Cooke did not uniformly distinguish the extracts he was in the habit of taking from books. Sometimes he inserted such among his own miscellaneous remarks; and although frequently he put a reference to the work from which he had made the extract, and usually appended his *initials* to his own papers; yet, sometimes, he neglected both these discriminative marks. This has occasioned me much anxiety and trouble in making the selection, and may possibly have led me into error. Should the reader detect any such mistakes, he must attribute them to my deficiency of information, and not to any intention on Mr. Cooke's part, or on my own, to appropriate, as original, any portion of other men's writings.

Concerning all the articles here presented to the reader, it is necessary to state, that they have undergone none but very trivial corrections. I was

concerned to make them a fair *memento* of the man. Many of the papers might, I am sensible, have been greatly improved; and had they enjoyed the correction of the writer's own hand, they would doubtless have appeared to greater advantage. But I deemed it desirable, rather to insert them in their unfinished and fragmentary state, than risk, by alteration, the characteristic impress which they bear in almost every line. Most of these papers appeared calculated for usefulness, and some eminently so. This principle has, therefore, uniformly guided my selection.

In reference to the Letters, especially those entitled to *Ministers unknown*, and indeed in reference to all that appear without names, it may be necessary to say, for the satisfaction of such of the parties as may be alive, that the letters can now be identified by no persons but themselves. As some of these letters are admonitory, and contain very faithful reproofs to some brother Ministers, and as they were written in the privacy and sacredness of intimate friendship, it may be deemed improper that they should have been given to the public. It will, however, remove all sense of pain or injury, to assure such persons, that though Mr. Cooke preserved copies of these letters, he has left behind him *no clue whatever* to the parties to whom they were sent. Should any of these parties be still

alive, they may feel perfectly confident, that the *designation* of every one of these letters perished with the *writer*. Had they contained names, had there been any possibility of identifying them, or any probability of any personal pain or injury being the result, they should have been suppressed. But they appeared so likely to be useful to young ministers, so secure from misuse, and so illustrative of their author's fidelity, that, after mature deliberation and advice, I determined on their publication. Should any names ever become associated with them, it can be done exclusively by the parties themselves.

And now, with an apology for the unavoidable typographical errors, which my distance from the Press has occasioned, I commit the work to the candour of the reader, and the blessing of God. I have sought in the execution of it for myself and my subject, USEFULNESS—only *usefulness*. This, I feel a well-grounded confidence, will, through the Divine benediction, be its result, and in such an issue, the reader and the writer will rejoice together.

Worcester, May 5, 1828.

ERRATA.

Page 26 line 17 from bottom, for *feeding*, read *fading*.
40 20 *Cook*, read *Cooke*.
61 11 for *advisable* read *advisable*.
92 3 *preached*, read *preach*.
96 7 *was*, read *wast*.
— 8 from the bottom, the stop after *silver* should be a *comma*.
110 1 *Huntingdon*, read *Huntington*.
127 1 *after*, read *often*.
142 11 *all*, read *fall*.
152 28 *hied*, read *died*.
166 24 and 32 for *Woburn*, read *Weoburn*.
167 3 from the bottom, dele the letter *s*, and insert *last*.
181 2 for *wish* read *wished*.
187 10 *setting*, read *sitting*.
191 in the motto, for *righteous*, read *righteousness*.
197 line 21 for *diever*, read *discover*.
209 27 *dulging*, read *indulging*.
214 last line *have*, read *has*.
216 line 11 *endeavor*, read *endeavour*.
219 7 *lesson*, read *lessen*.
226 5 before *should*, insert *he*.
241 17 for *bood*, read *blood*.
252 32 *offers*, read *officers*.
253 32 insert an i in *established*.
258 3 for *or*, read *of*.
260 5 from bottom, for *Akan*, read *Achan*.
272 26 insert *the* before *New*.
284 two last lines, *according* and *enjoying* should change places.
304 line 23 for *the* read *that*.
331 11 from bottom, for *to*, read *too*.
334 5, 7, 8, dele *s*, in the word *yes*.
364 12 from bottom, for *for*, read *from*.
366 last line, insert *it is* before *to*, and *to* before *be*.
367 line 2 for *perfection*, read *persecution*.
369 13 from bottom, for *canst*, read *cannot*.
390 28 insert *the* before *abundance*.
402 12 for *in his*, read *on his*.
409 12 *thy*, read *their*.
411 3 insert *not* before *spiritual*.
430 5 from bottom, for *national*, read *notional*.
462 15 for *I doubts*, read *it doubts*.
476 4 *be*, read *he*.
596 8 *in* Christ, should be *even* Christ.

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MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. JOHN COOKE.

THE feeling which first prompts us to preserve a memorial of departed friends, evidently originates in that passion for immortality, which is among the first and the last efforts of human thought. The simplest state of this feeling is that which excites to the erection of the humble monumental stone, intended to mark and consecrate the place of inhumation. We have no reason to doubt that the attempt to memorialize the dead has been coeval with the race of man. Nor need we suppose, that the erection of the first pillar to the remembrance of departed worth, was designed as a simple recognition of the spot in which their remains were interred, but as a precise mode of embodying the recollections of their excellence, that by the fond and studious imitation of them, in the anticipation of falling ourselves beneath the stroke of death, we might go forward under an inspiring hope of a higher association in that state of new existence which awaits us. But when the monumental pillar becomes a brief and emphatic register of the character of the departed, we then aim to perpetuate beyond our own recollection and existence, the memory of those we have lost. This is the more developed and improved state, in which the same passion for immortality displays itself, among

nations who have advanced some few degrees in civilisation and art. An epitaph is the germ of biography. A book is but a more extended epitaph, presented in a form that shall amplify the recital, increase the publicity, and lengthen the duration of the record, beyond what can be anticipated of the mouldering stones which form the tomb, or mark the place of sepulture. The introduction of Christianity has sanctified the feeling, and given point and precision to its promptings. Wherever this is known and professed, these memorials rise numerously around to arrest indifference, and, amidst the agitations of life, propel our thoughts forward to the great sphere of eternity, and the august assemblage of the excellent of earth and heaven. It is thus we gain a substantial victory over Death. While he rends from us the persons that we loved, we yet give a species of immortality to their character, embodying all that we admired in them while living, and exerting upon our own sensibilities, no small portion of that influence, which came from their presence and their conversation.

The uses of biography, when it is a true and natural portraiture, are too obvious to need illustration and enforcement. To enter upon any recital of them here, would but divert attention from the object immediately before us. They will be best discovered in the gradual development of our narrative.

In presenting to the public, however, the Memoirs of an individual, comparatively retired in his habits, and confined, in the sphere of his exertions, to a small section of the Christian church, it will not be expected that the author can produce any of that excitement which accompanies the lives of men, who have moved in the front of public affairs, or stood on the pinnacles of civil and religious life; yet, though we have no name to inscribe on these pages, which will act as a fascinating spell on the eye or the ear which it addresses, and attach an absorbing interest to the story to which it is prefixed, we may be allowed to hope, that all who engage in the perusal of the following narrative, will find it fraught with no small portion of that interest, which best subserves personal improvement, and awakens adoring admiration of that benignant arrangement of divine wisdom, which so often makes individuals of comparatively humble station, at once the recipients and administrators of the selectest and most imperishable benedictions.

THE REV. JOHN COOKE, was born in London, December the 16th, in the year 1760. His father resided in Virginia Street, St. George's in the East, and was engaged in a respectable line of business as a wine-cooper. His mother's family connexions appear to have been highly respectable, and, in one line, to have partaken of noble race and pedigree. Mrs. Cooke is known to have brought into the family, at her marriage, some valuable property, which it is not improbable contributed, with other circumstances, to unfit the mind of her husband for that sober and laborious application to business, which can alone secure the rewards of industry. Several estates to which she is known to have been heiress, and which ought to have descended to her children, were alienated before her death, although it is supposed no legal title was ever made to them, or, indeed, could be made, during the minority of her sons. One of these estates, a small copyhold of 60 acres at Latchinden, in the county of Essex, of which we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter, was the only property of this kind, which remained to Mrs. Cooke's children at the time of her death; and this, by a singular interposition of Providence, was secured to John, the subject of this Memoir.

John Cooke had a sister older, and brother younger than himself, who both died at an early age—the one some time before, and the other soon after their mother. When John was about five, and his brother Thomas about four years of age, their mother was removed from them, under circumstances that made a deep impression upon the infant mind of her son John. These circumstances were among the earliest and the most vigorous of his recollections. They impressed upon the imagination of the child so clear an image, that all through life he could embody his loss, in a distinct and identical conception of the *person*, *voice*, and *manner* of a mother. In her last illness she was affected with delirium, and, during one of its paroxysms, having called her son John to come to her, for the purpose of handing something that she wanted, when he came within her reach, she suddenly stretched forth her hand, and knocked him to the ground.

There are incidents in human life which exert an influence upon the character, or the yet unformed embryo of the character, which no system of training or education can boast. In the season of childhood, trains of feeling and thought may

be awakened, which shall materially affect the habits of the mind for a length of time; and these may issue in a bias distinctly perceptible, and capable of being assigned to its undoubted origin. John Cooke's feelings were early excited, in a very high and unusual degree, towards his mother, and it would be no difficult task to point out certain traits of exquisite tenderness in his character, which it would hardly be reasonable to deny, had a close connexion with the very painful and exciting circumstances of his early life. The incident just mentioned was comparatively trivial; but it was altogether new, and strange to the child of five years old. It greatly distressed him, because he tenderly loved his mother, and he knew she was strongly attached to himself. He understood nothing about delirium, or the true cause of her conduct, but the impression wrought by it upon his mind was deep and lasting. Such an act from a mother, of whose love to himself he could not doubt, and when he had given her no offence, but with cheerful readiness obeyed her will, appeared so strange and cruel, that it required a length of time to calm his feelings. The painful impression upon his mind was increased by another incident, which occurred about the same period. A pair of scissars had been inadvertently left within reach of his mother, while she was under the influence of the same disease, and with them she made an attempt upon her own life. She lacerated her throat in a distressing manner, without effecting any material injury. But the distress experienced by John was extreme. He speaks many years after of the grief these scenes caused him, and of the difficulty with which he was pacified. Though the events themselves are by no means remarkable, yet it is remarkable that they should have so deeply and painfully affected so young a child. The probability, however, is, that his mind was, from very early life, predisposed to reflection, and that these events happened at an age adapted to give them both poignancy and perpetuity in his feelings; for had they happened at an earlier period, they would have excited only a momentary pang, and had they occurred a few years later, their explanation would have been so easy and obvious, that they would have produced no such impressions though they might possibly have lived as long in his memory. His mother's affliction, as it produced an entire change in the situation and prospects of her family, made this the first remarkable epoch in the life of her son John. The mental af[illegible]tion which had caused the distressing incidents just

recorded, soon ceased, but worse symptoms succeeded; and it became evident, that a fatal issue of the disease was at hand. Reason, however, had resumed its seat, and she became perfectly sensible to her own situation, and that to which her two infants were soon to be exposed. Perfectly aware that their welfare was not likely to engage the attention of their father, she summoned to her bed-side a sister of the name of Stammers, who lived at Colchester. Mrs. Stammers appeared at the call of her dying sister; she heard the earnest and affectionate entreaties of a mother, who solemnly committed to her care these two sons—John, at the age of five, and Thomas, at the age of four years.

Mrs. Cooke died, her sister attended the funeral, and then returned to Colchester; but took no thought of the motherless, and all but fatherless babes who called her aunt, and to whom, in the affecting crisis of a sister's death, she had promised to be a *mother*. From this period, John Cooke and his brother were exposed to all the ills and dangers which await infants, when bereft, at that early age, of the parent on whose care Providence seems mainly to have cast them. To such young children, the loss of an affectionate and diligent mother, is but ill supplied by redoubled care and attention in the surviving parent. But when that survivor is disqualified and indisposed by evil habits to supply the loss, or even to discharge his own proper portion of parental duty, the case becomes doubly deplorable. Such was the unhappy situation of John and Thomas Cooke, after the calamitous stroke which deprived them of the tender and anxious care of a mother. Unheeded by their remaining parent, and left to the care of a servant, who most treacherously neglected them; their health and life were frequently in imminent danger, and had it not been for the occasional attentions of an aunt of the name of Merchant, who resided near them, and who does not appear to have felt any very deep interest in their welfare, they would probably both have perished in their infancy. Possibly this would have given little pain to the unnatural father, as their life was the only remaining obstacle to the total alienation of his wife's property. His habits had become profligate, and his companions "those that drink strong drink." The natural result was, the decline of his business, and a growing eagerness to possess himself of the little remaining property, which was the only hope for the sustenance, and education of his children. Providence, however, kept him from his purpose. Perhaps the peculiar cir-

cumstances in which the property was placed, threw obstacles in his way, for it is certain he would have felt none in sacrificing the future interest and welfare of his offspring. The youngest boy, being of a more tender frame than John, soon began to suffer from the neglect and bad management of the unprincipled and hireling woman, who was employed in the capacity of servant in the family. The child's health rapidly failed, and in less than a year, he followed his mother to the silence and repose of the tomb.

John Cooke was now left quite alone, under the care of this servant, whose neglect had brought his brother to the grave, and frequently exposed himself to danger. These things influenced the mind of his aunt, who resided within daily view of all that passed, and she was at length touched with pity for the neglected child, and resolved to take him under her own care. He was accordingly introduced to her house, but was in frequent danger of his life, through the folly and drunkenness of his father, who would sometimes come home after midnight, and demand his son to be brought to him. Thus the child was sometimes dragged out of his bed in the middle of the night, and removed to his father's house, who would cruelly treat him, and act towards him with all the capricious folly and violence of a madman. His aunt, however, persevered to keep him in her house for about a year. During this period he suffered great distress from the death of a playfellow, for whom he had contracted a strong affection. He says, "the strength of my affection for a playfellow named Crawford, who lived in the house opposite to my uncle's, occasioned thousands of tears, sighs and pains, for years after I left London. He was between five and six years of age, engaged in play with me and other boys. By some misapprehension of his conduct in taking up his top, one boy knocked him down, and the others jumped upon him, and forced his breath from his body. At the age of twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty, I feel the pang—my heart aches, and my tears flow, as if I had just lost him."

During John Cooke's residence with his aunt Merchant, he suffered frequent afflictions; and this circumstance, probably, in connexion with the total disregard of his interests, or even of his life, manifested by his unhappy father, induced his uncle and aunt, to entertain the purpose of sending him into the country. This may be described as one of the most important events of his life, and as leading, under the wise arrangements of an inscrutable, but gracious Providence, to the

most happy results. His removal from the sight and influence of so unnatural a parent, could not but prove a blessing. His affections had been alienated by the total absence of every thing like paternal attention, and his feelings had often been wounded by his father's wanton cruelty and capricious severity. Many degrees nearer to decent humanity, as were his uncle and aunt, they seem to have felt for him no very large measure of tenderness, nor did their house afford a very flattering prospect, either for his health or his improvement. It was indeed an incomparably better asylum for the unprotected and neglected child, than his father's house; but it was lamentably deficient in that sort of attention, which maternal solicitude would have paid, and which the advancing years of the boy began to require. In all respects, therefore, his removal was likely to be advantageous, and we cannot but admire the providence of God, which brought it about at a juncture the most opportune and critical.

The individual who rented the farm to which John would be entitled when he came of age, was applied to by the uncle to receive the boy under his care, to educate, and afterwards bring him up to the business of his own farm. Knowing something of the wretched habits of the child's father, and pitying his tender age and forlorn situation, this person consented to the proposal, with a cheerful liberality, that did him infinite credit. The time of the child's departure for the country arrived, and on this occasion, the sensibility of his heart was excited, at the prospect of leaving the few relatives he possessed. Their cares had not been very lavishly bestowed upon him, but yet they were all the friends he had, and the thought of leaving them, though, as he was told, but for a time, gave him extreme pain. He describes his prospects at this period, as exceedingly distressing, and as producing an anguish not to be told. His situation was indeed forlorn and orphan-like, in a high degree. For, in the depth of winter, with a deep snow upon the ground, and at the age of only seven years, he was committed to the driver of a cart or waggon, to be conveyed a long and wearisome journey, to meet at the end of it, he knew not whom, and to be treated he knew not how. It was a sad and bitter day to the feelings and anticipations of the child; but it proved a deliverance from ruin, and the basis of his future respectability.

From this period, John Cooke may be looked upon as totally abandoned of his natural protectors, and as the peculiar nursling of a kind and watchful Providence. The friends

who had shewn him some degree of kindness, probably to save appearances, or for the sake of their own character, took little thought of him, from the time when they decently devolved the care of him to another; and never again resumed their anxieties, till the prospect of personal advantage, derivable from his property, presented itself as a bait to their selfishness. But the friendship which was lacking among his relatives, he found among strangers. The tenant who held his land, was an honest, tender-hearted man, who proved, under God, a father and friend to the forsaken and destitute child. When he arrived at Latchinden, according to his own expression, his "grief was inexpressible." He felt himself "a stranger in a strange land;" and though at an age the least remarkable for anything like reflection, yet he felt deeply the unhappy and forsaken condition to which he was now reduced. He had been induced to go into the country, under the delusive hope that he should return to his uncle and aunt in a fortnight; and by this promise he consoled himself for the few first days of his residence at Latchinden.

His affections, however, were soon weaned from London. Mr. Laver, his new guardian and master, behaved towards him with such "exquisite tenderness," that John Cooke soon felt towards him like his own son, and wished only to live and die with him. "Thus," says Mr. C., "'when my father and mother forsook me, the Lord took me up.' Mr. Laver's affection '*grew with my growth, and strengthened with my strength;*' and he 'spared me, as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him.' I found in Mr. John Laver a father and mother, 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,' closer than a mother's sister (*alluding to his aunt, who promised his dying mother that she would be a mother to her two boys*), or even a father. The Lord gave me favour in the sight of this man, and in him, as God's agent, the fatherless John Cooke found mercy. May God reward his paternal kindness, by answering my prayers for him—the prayers of grateful anguish for his salvation. 'If I forget thee,' my best earthly friend, 'let my right hand forget her cunning.' When I walked out in the fields with Mr. Laver, I lifted up my childish heart to God in prayer, that I might live with him as many years as I trod (*steps*) in his footsteps, without missing one; and if I missed one, I began again, and numbered them till I was satisfied: for I loved him as I loved my own life. 'Come, old man,' he would say, taking me by the hand, 'let us go and see the sheep, or the ploughmen,' and my heart

leaped for joy at the sound. If, on any occasion, he left me a few yards, he would put his hands behind him as the signal, which I eagerly obeyed, to seize his hands again. Such actions and words were 'the cords of a man' by which I was drawn; these were the 'law of kindness' by which I was bound. To offend him, was to wound my own soul. I loved his commands; I loved *him*, 'with all my heart and soul, and mind and strength.' God of my early life, this is thy due; help me, constrain me, to answer this claim."

Thus powerfully was the heart of the boy attracted to this excellent individual; and thus, at the important crisis, did God provide for him a home of peace and comfort, and an affectionate guardian, who, without any tie of consanguinity, or any sense of obligation, soon felt for him almost a father's concern. There is no doubt that Mr. Laver perceived at that early period many pleasing qualities in the child. It is highly probable that he was a boy of unusual gravity and thoughtfulness; and that the scenes of trouble he had already witnessed, and the destitution of friends and companions he had experienced, had given to his boyish heart a tender, if not a somewhat melancholy bias, which might make him unusually interesting to a man advanced in years, and who appears to have been a bachelor, and very recluse and regular in all his habits. It is certain, however, that the attachment was mutual, and that Mr. Laver derived as much pleasure from the company of the boy, as the boy did from the constant attention and kindness of his master.

Soon after his removal from the miseries and vices to which he had been exposed in London, the providence of God was kindly displayed towards him through another individual, who had no connexion with the family. This individual was a Mr. Clark, of Maldon; who, having heard that there was a friendless child, heir to the small estate at Latchinden, whose title would inevitably fail, unless some one came forward to secure it, on the appointment of a *third court*, when it was essential that the requisite fines should be paid, this gentleman, with a benevolence the most pure and disinterested, came forward, and paid forty pounds on behalf of the child. By this means the title was renewed, and secured for the benefit of John Cooke. The interest manifested by Mr. Clark did not cease with this act of generosity. He soon discovered the unknown object of his kindness. He sent for him, and found him to be an interesting and promising boy. About this period John was sent to a grammar-school at Maldon, partly through

the considerate and wise benevolence of this gentleman, who continued, while the boy was at school, to send frequently for him upon a Sunday afternoon; and besides shewing him much kindness, and giving him good advice, he regularly paid ten pounds a-year towards his schooling, as long as John went to Maldon.

This was an act of liberality, so noble, so completely disinterested, and so important in its results, not only to the individual, who was its immediate object, but through him to thousands of others, that we cannot but place it in a prominent station among the incidents of Mr. C.'s childhood, and mark it with a peculiar emphasis—"This was the Lord's doing;" and, in Mr. C.'s history, it was one of those important links, which shews itself to be closely connected with all his future career.

At length, when it was supposed he had acquired knowledge enough for the business of farming, he was removed from school. His years passed away in the ordinary labours of that homely, but healthful occupation. Still he had no religious impressions, and was not in a situation likely to receive any. He enjoyed, however, several very merciful deliverances from danger; which, at the time, affected and impressed his mind. "At twelve years of age," he says, "I went with a young man, who was eighteen years old, to a river to learn to swim. This was the first attempt. With a strong rope across my chest, and a two-gallon bottle at each end of the string, I walked out of my depth. Feeling the bouyancy of the water, I cried to the young man. He could not swim; and in attempting to reach me, found himself in danger of being lifted from his feet." In this situation, it appears, the youth could render him no assistance without greatly endangering his own life. Providentially for John Cooke, the bottles sustained him above water, until the wind, which was strong, by degrees blew the bottles towards the shore. Had not the wind been strong enough to overcome the current, so far at least as to make the bottles flow towards the side, he must have been borne away, and in all probability would have sunk to the bottom. Another very remarkable case of providential preservation, occurred when he was only thirteen years of age. Mr. Laver had left him, one Sabbath afternoon, in the house by himself. Wanting amusement, he thought he would take his master's gun, and go into a neighbouring field of oats, to fire at a large number of rooks there collected. The rooks swarmed over his head,

and so great was their noise, that when he had pulled the trigger of his gun, he thought it had discharged its contents; and in anticipation of his exploit, imagined that he had hit some of the rooks. He then rested his gun upon the ground, and blew into the barrel to clear it, as he had seen Mr. Laver often do, when he had discharged it. But the gun was not discharged, and the instant he removed his mouth from the barrel it went off. He says, in reference to this occurrence, "I was so surprised, alarmed and shocked, that I sat down on a bank extremely sick with the fright; but never thought of God, Providence, or eternity. 'God speaketh once, yea twice, and man *perceiveth* it not.'" Another instance of an equally narrow escape from sudden death, occurred when he was about fifteen. He got upon a cart, loaded with wet manure. The cart suddenly fell backwards, and himself under it. The whole weight of the load fell upon him, and in a short time he must have been suffocated, had not two men, at a considerable distance, seen the cart tip backwards and the boy upon it. They ran to his relief, and happily succeeded in removing the pressure before he was smothered.

These were memorable deliverances, but they produced only a momentary impression; like most youths, he soon lost sight of the hand that had saved him. These providences, however, in after life, were not forgotten; they were reviewed and recorded with a lively sense of the divine goodness, and with the cheerful consecration of a life, so preserved, to the glory of God.

It is not necessary to dilate the account of Mr. Cooke's boyish years, nor to dwell on the incidents which, whether striking or common, had no marked influence in the formation of his character, and no direct or obvious connexion with his future prospects in life. Our chief object, in this part of the narrative, is to trace the leading events of his course, and especially to exhibit the hand of Providence, which kept him from the dangers of boyhood, as well as from the perils of a neglected infancy. We therefore pass over the whole period of his continuance with Mr. Laver, for this obvious and adequate reason, that beyond the incidents already noticed, it supplies no materials that could either prove interesting to the general reader, or gratifying to Mr. Cooke's friends.

I therefore come at once to the first important step, which may be said to have affected his future course through life, or to have contributed to the formation of that rare combi-

nation of character which our friend subsequently exhibited.

He had resided with Mr. Laver about eleven years, and had reached, or nearly so, the age of eighteen, when some restless feelings began to evince their existence in his mind. He was not discontented, neither was he altogether happy. He does not fully describe the nature of the restlessness which first began to work in his mind. But I suspect, from the mention he makes of a reproof Mr. Laver gave him, that the real cause was a disrelish of that sort of restraint under which he was held by the moral and exemplary conduct of his master. It is probable his mind, at this period, could not brook the control to which, as a boy, he had quietly submitted, or for the exercise of which there had been, in his younger years, less occasion. I have no doubt that, as a lad, he was high spirited and untractable. At the period of which we are speaking he had, however, lost none of his affection for Mr. Laver, nor was Mr. Laver's towards him in the slightest degree impaired. But John Cooke began to show a great propensity to profane swearing; his friend Mr. Laver had often reproved him for it, for though by no means a pious character, he was observant of morality, and paid some attention to his church. But the subject of this Memoir had arrived at that age, when the vices of an evil nature begin first to throw off restraint and fear—when self-will ventures to assume a loftier mien, and to erect itself into an attitude of defiance. This may well be described as the most critical period of human life, particularly as it regards the character; for then, the independence of manhood outstrips, or more properly, precedes both its wisdom and experience, and the character presents the unnatural combination of manly notions with juvenile powers—the rashness and indiscretion of boyhood, with the rights claimed by maturer years—and in this middle state, the party can neither be treated as a man nor as a boy. This period in Mr. Cooke's life would unquestionably have been marked by more violent outbreakings of vice, perhaps by a hasty and passionate disruption from his kind master, had not strong affection, an affection in many respects more influential than he would have felt towards a father, kept his evil propensities under check. However he might dislike the moral restraint his master wished to exercise, he could not do anything unkind or disrespectful to the individual, who had acted towards him with as much affection and care as if he had been his own child. Though Mr. Laver's reproofs tended to make the lad

uneasy, yet I suspect they had a very salutary effect upon his character; and most probably were the means, in connexion with a circumstance which occurred about this period, of inducing him to leave off his profane swearing. An individual with whom he was acquainted being engaged at cards, frequently lost the game; in anger he threw down his cards, and imprecated a dreadful judgment on his eyes, as of no manner of use to him. He was shortly after observed to rub his eyes, as though they were painful. The next morning he was stone blind!—but his suffering produced no change. Mr. Cooke, in relating this anecdote, says: "for myself, I was to be numbered on this occasion among the proofs, of which *Wicked Will.* himself is such an eminent instance, that no judgment of itself can convert the heart. This is the work alone of special grace. I can look back with admiration at that mercy, but for which, I had been added to the number of warnings, instead of being spared to recount them." *Congregational Magazine, Feb.* 1818, p. 98.

It is certain, that some impression of the immorality of swearing, was made upon the mind of John Cooke, by the reproofs of Mr. Laver, in connexion with this singular occurrence. But it went no further. As to religion, he had imbibed the too common notions, that the occasional repetition of *the Lord's Prayer* and *the Belief*, would atone for all his sins. Perhaps it was well, at least in reference to his preservation from gross vice, that something like a pharisaical spirit was now gaining the ascendency. For the scenes to which he was now approaching, would certainly have proved ruinous to a mind less under the influence of shame and moral pride, or destitute of the more efficient counteraction of real religion. In the absence of these higher principles, it was well for him, that the good instructions of his friend and master had produced an ambition to be esteemed both moral and religious.

This was the state of his feelings, when his friends in London meditated for him, whether with a sincere or sinister intention will hereafter appear, a separation from Mr. Laver. Through the death of his father, who had expired in a fit of intoxication, his uncle, *Merchant*, of whom mention has before been made, became his guardian, and took upon him the management of his affairs. His uncle, accordingly, soon broached to him the subject of a removal from his present situation. The ostensible reason was, the importance of witnessing other modes of farming, and the anxiety of his uncle

and aunt for his improvement. The proposal was at first rejected. He could not entertain the thought of a separation from Mr. Laver. But, after a short time, circumstances seemed to favour the proposal. Some of his youthful companions and himself disagreed. Several alarming murders had been committed in the neighbourhood of the village, which spread a great alarm, and he began to wish for a removal. The flattering promises of his uncle, and the hopes of advancement in life, conspired with these circumstances, and at length he consented that his uncle should mention the subject to Mr. Laver; for, after all, his feelings were so tender upon this point, that he felt it impossible himself to propose a separation.

This business was accordingly arranged between his uncle and Mr. Laver. The appointed time arrived for his removal from this peaceful abode, which had, indeed, proved to him a happy asylum. His uncle came down, to take him under his own immediate protection, and to obtain a final settlement of accounts between Mr. Laver and his youthful landlord. Mr. C. records, with expressions of strong respect and admiration, the strict integrity, and affectionate generosity, of his friend Mr. Laver. He says, "in reckoning up our parting accounts, he proved himself to be, what I had always esteemed him, a man of a generous and faithful disposition. What visible and distinguishing marks of God's mercy towards me, when I cared not for him! How kindly he turned the wheel of Providence in my favour! How did he open and shut his hand, to deal favourably with me."

But during his uncle's stay at Latchinden, which appears to have been protracted during two or three weeks, an occurrence took place, which served to give him the first insight into the character of the people with whom he was now to be connected, and who must inevitably have an influence upon his future prospects. He had left his uncle's house in London, at an age when he was incapable of forming any opinion of his character; and as to his other relatives at Colchester, he had neither seen them nor heard of them, since the period of his mother's funeral, which had taken place when he was a mere child. It was, however, now suggested by his uncle, that before they took their departure for London, they should pay a visit to his aunt and her family, who lived at Colchester. Both Mr. Laver and John Cooke were indisposed to shew her that mark of attention, as she had taken no interest whatever in his welfare since the decease of his mother.

But the entreaties of his uncle at last prevailed, and he consented to go. The journey was fixed for the sabbath, and they accordingly both started on horseback for Colchester. But his uncle soon began to set his nephew a most pernicious and dangerous example, by stopping frequently on the road to drink. The sober and correct habits in which the youth had been brought up, kept him, however, from imitating his uncle's example. Happily for both, the youth had so much more prudence than the man: for, long before the end of the journey, the uncle became so inebriated, as to be incapable of managing his horse. At length both horse and rider fell. For some time the unhappy man was quite speechless, but at length he recovered himself, and, after changing horses with his nephew, was again placed in the saddle, his face lacerated and bleeding, and his limbs sadly bruised. It appears from Mr. Cooke's remark, that this unhappy man had taken an oath to his wife (the other maternal aunt of John Cooke), not to take the young man to Colchester; and, probably, the uneasiness of his conscience was one cause that impelled him to drown his recollection in excess of liquor. At length, after much difficulty, they arrived at Colchester. The relatives who resided there had little interest in the youth, but they had an eager desire to enjoy his property; and they accordingly feigned pleasure at the interview.

Although John Cooke was not yet arrived at the age of nineteen, and had seen little of the world, or the wiles of wicked men, yet he was endowed with so much good sense, and sterling honesty himself, that he readily penetrated the plots and snares of his covetous and unprincipled relations. The accident by the way, operated, he says, as a warning to him, as to the kind of people to whose guidance he had now committed himself. "If I had not had this bitter drop, I should most likely have had a poisonous draught." During the week of their visit, many baits appear to have been tried to entrap the unprotected youth, by means of female cousins, who were used as instruments to inveigle him entirely into the power of the artful and base woman, who called him nephew. But at this period God impressed his imagination with an unusual fear of death. He thought every day his end was near; and this broke the power of temptation. His suspicions of his aunt's base intentions had been awake from the first, and every project to ruin him, which his good sense or his moral feeling enabled him to defeat, while it confirmed these suspicions, excited an unslumbering

vigilance, as for his life. At length they brought him to the brink of a pit, as he says, " more dangerous, devilish, and deep." The more cruel, as it was entirely concealed till he was in it.

A person was introduced to him, under the name of a relation, who shewed him great attention, and professed for him an uncommon regard. In the course of a very few days, he formed such an intimacy with our young friend, as to induce him to take a ride out with him a few miles into the country, engaging to return with him by supper-time. John Cooke, suspecting no evil in this proposal, which bore the face of nothing more than an innocent recreation, assented. But after being taken a circuitous and most intricate route, and much further than he had any intention of going, he was introduced to a public-house, late at night, which proved to be the haunt of persons engaged in smuggling. He soon discovered that the friend, who had inveigled him into the snare, was regularly engaged in illicit traffic. In such society as this, the youth, accustomed only to the rural occupations of his farm, felt alarmed. His companion continued drinking and carousing with those he called his friends, till they were all nearly intoxicated. They did what they could to entangle him with the same snare, but he had wisdom enough not to surrender himself to the power of drink. At length, scenes of wantonness were presented to his youthful eye, which cannot be described. Every effort was employed to entice him to his destruction, but a sort of guard seemed to be placed around him to keep him, unpractised as he was in the ways of men, from the snares of these workers of iniquity. His disgust at what he beheld, kept him safe from the allurement of flagrant vice. He urged his companion who had brought him to the house to leave it, and lead him back again. But he refused. It was his element, and there he determined still to remain. The situation of the young man was almost desperate. He knew not what course to take. To remain in the house, was like dwelling in the precincts of an infernal region—to depart was perilous—the hour was late—the night was dark—the road wholly unknown to him. The difficulty of reaching Colchester without his treacherous guide, appeared almost insurmountable. But even this attempt, dangerous as it might prove, he deemed preferable to remaining with the infamous persons who were using every effort to make him their prey. At length he took his horse, resolving to make the attempt of escaping from this

pit of destruction. He went forward, but every step plunged him in new difficulties. It was so dark that he could not see his road, and it was so late, that it was not possible to ask directions. He wandered about for a considerable time, until he lost his road, and got so entangled, that it was with great difficulty he groped his way back again to the detestable place he had left. There he found his pretended friend as he had left him. He seated himself once more by his side, overwhelmed with grief, and almost desponding of deliverance. He feared his life would be aimed at. It was now one in the morning. Worn out with fatigue and exhaustion, he had almost sunk into the very arms of the destroyer. Tea was prepared in an adjoining room. Greatly did he long to taste it. It would have refreshed his frame and cheered his spirits; but it was prepared *by* and *in* such company, and amidst such scenes of wantonness, as made him resolve to forego the refreshment, and keep at as great a distance as possible from the snare. His cruel foe at length found the resolution of the youth more than a match for him; and being reproached for his baseness in introducing one that he called a relative to such scenes, he consented to depart. He now led the young man to the places where he deposited his smuggled goods, and to the houses of several who were his partners in the unlawful traffic. Abundance of drink was obtained at these places; but as it was a dark night, John Cooke was able to pacify his pretended friend, by seeming to drink with him, while he contrived to let the destructive liquor flow down his horse's neck. At length, and after great difficulties, they reached Colchester; and very speedily, Mr. Cooke contrived to bid farewell to these scenes of temptation and vice, and to those base pretenders to friendship, who had used every artifice to make him as much the child of the devil as themselves. Their object in all this was, evidently, to have brought about his destruction, that they might have shared the estate to which they knew he was entitled, and which none could touch while he lived.

I have entered into this detail more fully than perhaps many readers would have deemed necessary, and certainly more so than the nature of the circumstances, disgusting and humiliating as they are, would justify. But I have given the recital, in continuance of that memorable display of divine Providence, which distinguished the early and unenlightened, as well, as the subsequent, years of our esteemed friend. He was, indeed, "*preserved* in Christ Jesus, and

called." But there is another view in which these apparently trivial circumstances rise into importance. The influence they had upon the character of Mr. Cooke, is one of the most interesting considerations connected with them. They were the occasions of developing some of those mental qualities which became prominent in all his future life, and mainly contributed, under a divine blessing, to that extensive usefulness with which he was honoured. These events happened when his mind was just beginning to exert itself; when it was yet untaught by books; and they gave him an insight into the baseness of mankind; they opened to him a door in the human bosom; they showed him the hollowness of pretended friendship, and forewarned him, by a terrible lesson of human depravity, of what he would find continually around him, as he stepped forward into life. The startling nature of these his first *rencontres* with the world, put him upon his guard, and thereby called into exercise those rare qualities of self-possession, and decision, which Mr. C. displayed in after-life, in a pre-eminent degree. These events contributed to awaken that manliness and independence, that resolute dependence upon his own judgment, when he felt that judgment to be on the side of reason and uprightness, which throughout life made him act, and feel, and speak, as if he rested on no man's arm.

Gentle and kind to a proverb, when he saw no evil was intended, and no duplicity practised, but possessed of nerves of iron, and a brow of brass, against the workers of iniquity. It is highly interesting to see those pre-eminent qualities which Mr. Cooke possessed above most men, first displaying themselves in one of the most critical situations to which a youth of eighteen, wholly unfitted to grapple with such foes, was unexpectedly brought. It was not, perhaps, to the strength of his feelings or virtuous habit, that we are to attribute the memorable stand he made, and the ever memorable victory he obtained over his crafty and cruel relatives; but to his natural good sense and shrewdness, which gave him a ready insight into the plans of these friends, and kept him constantly alive to the fear of evil. He acknowledges in his memoranda, that he might have fallen into these snares at another time, and under other circumstances: but that now he had a special dread of the intentions of these relatives, and this made him constantly suspect, that all their plans were laid with a view to his ruin, and that they might divide the spoil of his property. Here, then, we behold him first

learning, and at the same moment practising, some of the most important lessons of moral prudence. These things taught him to look below the surface for the true springs and impulses of human conduct, and to form his judgment of men and things, less by their *words* than by their doings. This experience of one week's visit to his relatives at Colchester, was worth years of study, and gave an impulse to his powers of reflection, caution, and self possession, which was of the utmost value in his ministerial course; and though this experience was so painful and even perilous to his moral feelings and principles, yet it awoke and called into exercise an energy of mind, a resolute firmness, a command of spirit, which eminently fitted him for those future scenes and duties of life to which he was destined, and many of which were of a very trying and peculiar character.

After this singular and perilous visit, he returned with his professed protector to the house of Mr. Laver, to sum up his concerns, and bid farewell to the scenes of his childhood and youth. The following *memorandum* of the parting scene between him and his master, written evidently while Mr. C. was yet a youth, is so simple and genuine a picture of the ardent friendship of these two individuals for each other, that I shall transcribe it entire.

"At length the morning came when part we must. And now my mind swam against the stream. My heart desired not to leave him, and his was cleaving to me. This caused very much grief on both sides. He went with my uncle and myself some part of the way, for we had five miles to go to the coach, and were bound for London. At our parting my heart was full, whilst tears from his eyes, as well as the gesture of his body, doubled my distress. Being dubious of my uncle's intent, he cautioned me with expressions of love and tender regard to return to him if things did not go well; so careful and sincere a friend was he, that he *begged very hard* of me to return if things sped not well, and promised, father-like, gladly to receive me, although I now left him without any just cause or reason. I gave him a slight promise to come back, unless I found a sober family to live in. Now, farewell, my master! My guardian! My best and only friend, in whom the comfort of my life was bound up! The loss of him was the greatest loss I ever sustained, for he was the best earthly friend I ever found. Farewell, Latchinden, and all my associates! Farewell, all my false hopes of happiness, which I had built there! And, farewell to peace—for a year

and a half—during which time my conscience sorely rebuked me, the Devil as sorely tempted me, and I feared God's terrible hand would follow to punish my folly for leaving my place unjustly."

He now came under the special care, or rather at the mercy of, his uncle, to the metropolis, from which he had been removed at the early age of seven, and to which he was now introduced after the lapse of about eleven years, under circumstances, and at an age the most perilous. Had not a Providence, infinitely vigilant and gracious, adopted him as its special care, he must indeed have fallen a prey to the dangers that awaited him.

He had left Mr. Laver with a considerable sum of money in his pocket. His uncle and aunt soon contrived to exhaust this little store. While it lasted, their kindness and attention were unremitting; but when it began to fail, friendship dried up with it. Their nephew had continued some time with them, without any exertions being made to procure him a suitable situation. At length he found that he must depend entirely upon his own efforts. He was abandoned by those who had drawn him from his comfortable home and kind master, in the country; and, from the habits of his uncle and aunt, he foresaw that they were fast verging towards ruin. They had dissipated a respectable property of their own, and now seemed resolved to involve their nephew in the same wilful calamity.

It ought, indeed, to be commemorated, as a singular mark of the kind hand of God over him, that, disregarded as he was in London, left daily at large without employment, without companions, without religious principles, and with money at his command, he should have escaped the multiplicity of snares such a metropolis presents. Yet such was the fact. Month after month rolled by without employment of any kind. He longed to escape from the treacherous grasp of his relations; he wished to be relieved from the *tedium* of idleness; and, as his property was not sufficient for his support without some occupation, he longed to be engaged. Daily he wandered about the streets, and inquired in all directions for any honest employment, that might remove him from his connexions and relieve his mind. But he could find none to engage him, and he had no friends to interest themselves on his behalf. His mind became anxious and irritated. He longed daily for the innocent and healthful occupations of his farm. A thousand times he

thought of the parting invitation of his friend and master. He wished to return; but shame and fear, which daily grew stronger, seemed to throw impassable obstacles in his way. His mind, naturally vigorous and manly, expended itself in vain regrets and gloomy anticipations. These soon connected themselves with a future world, and some vague notions he had received of the devil and infernal spirits. This state of mind increased, until he was wrought up to a pitch of great mental agony. His present friendless and destitute situation, he viewed as a divine judgment for leaving his affectionate master. He expected nothing but heavier visitations. His fancy was filled with terrible images, and night and day a brooding melancholy settled upon his thoughts.

At length, after a variety of mortifying disappointments, which proved unspeakably distressing to the ardour of his youthful mind, he hired himself to a farmer, with a view of improving his knowledge, and preparing himself for business. He now went to live near Rumford, in Essex. His situation proved uncomfortable, and he continued in it but a few weeks. The disappointment which followed this effort was the more painful, as it had been a sort of desperate attempt to obtain an honourable employment, and exposed him, in its failure, to the dire necessity of returning to his uncle's house. It appears from his private papers, that these relatives were at this time enjoying the proceeds of his little property; and yet, when he returned to cast himself upon their protection, they evinced a base unwillingness to receive him. They could not, however, absolutely refuse him a place in their house; and there once more, with extreme reluctance, he took up his abode. He had continued but a short time in the family when his aunt was taken ill and died. Though the loss was not important, yet it deserves mention here, because of its connexion with his religious feelings. It contributed to bring on a crisis, both in his worldly prospects, and in his religious experience, by which the whole of his future character and engagements may be said to have been regulated. Although, at this period, utterly destitute of any knowledge of the Gospel, he yet perceived, and deeply regretted, the unfitness of his aunt for so fearful an event. It quickened his mind to a sense of the awfulness of death to an unprepared sinner; but it induced no inquiry into what a sinner must do to be saved. It appears rather to have given an impulse to his self-righteousness, and to have increased his expectations of being able

to obtain true peace, by attention to a few of the forms of religion.

It is abundantly evident that his Pharisaism was now growing upon him, and that the scenes of irreligion and vice to which he was exposed, had the effect of making him doubly zealous in his efforts to be virtuous. The contrast presented to his mind between the scenes he had left and those he now witnessed, naturally enough excited a consciousness of greater purity, both of principle and practice; and this in the sight of a holy God, and in an unrenewed heart, produced a self-justifying spirit. This being driven on to its just results, brought him into that state of mental bondage, which we shall soon have occasion to describe. His self-righteousness was to be put to the test, its falseness to be exposed, and his soul driven from the refuge of lies, by the sharp scourge of worldly troubles, and the flaming sword of divine justice. It is not unimportant to note this fact in the experience of our friend. It will, perhaps, help us to explain the skill that he subsequently acquired, in treating the case of self-righteous characters, and in liberating oppressed and labouring consciences from thraldom to the righteousness of the law.

It is a fact, which I have no doubt others have noted as well as myself, that many of those ministers who have stood foremost as the preachers of the doctrines of grace, and been pre-eminent in their zeal against a self-righteous spirit, have been persons who were previously under its influence; and, perhaps, had long been held in bondage by its vain, though sincere, attempts to obtain peace. Perhaps even those who have been inclined, I would not say to Antinomianism, but to that way of stating and preaching the doctrines of grace, which may be described as highly Calvinistic, may have derived that strong tendency to the doctrinal strain of preaching, from their own painful experience of the evils of the opposite theory.

It is often the case, too, that release from a state of subjection to Pharisaism is effected at once. The light of grace, when it comes to such characters, generally comes in a full blaze, as with the lightning's flash, and they then become the subjects of sudden conversion. This is another source of the strong bias they receive to exalt the doctrines of grace; and although the cause is decidedly of a divine character, its mode of operation, the tendency it produces, and all the strong characteristics it subsequently displays, are perfectly rational, and to be explained in strict

accordance with the soundest principles of mental philosophy. Many striking illustrations in the Annals of Evangelical Biography, will no doubt occur to the recollection of intelligent readers.

Conversions of this kind, which become proportionably rare as a religious education advances, and a gospel ministry becomes regular, generally produce Christians of a more lively, imposing, and chivalrous character, than that system of Christian instruction which commences with sound views of gospel truth, and which has no material discoveries to unfold when grace may begin to operate efficiently in the soul. In the one case, there is all the stimulus of novelty, and of novelty in combination with the most momentous and stirring discoveries: in the other, there can be no charm or surprise of discovery; it is only the resuscitation, or revival of truths, which had long been familiarized to the mind; which had remained dormant in the understanding, but which now, for the first time, begin to operate in the conscience, and on the affections. There are many points of interesting contrast in the experience and characters of the two classes of Christians, which I need not name; they will readily occur to the minds of persons who have thought upon the philosophy of experimental religion, and who are interested in such subjects. The two classes are finely balanced. God has set them both in his church; the judicious, matured and milder graces of the one, over against the more brilliant and energetic qualities of the other. So is it in all natural productions. Nowhere do we see uniformity; the physical constitution is like the mental; unity is every where, but uniformity no where. *Strength* is a widely different quality from *weight:* and so in minds, enthusiasm is one kind of power; a calm and slow judgment is a power of quite another kind. They accomplish different, perhaps equally important results.

Not that by such a reference to the phenomena of conversion, we would be supposed to ascribe its effect, in either case, to a merely natural cause. The results in both the different classes of conversions can be properly assigned to none but a supernatural and divine source. No philosophy short of that which embraces the doctrine of the divine spirit, can satisfactorily account for the production of the effect of regeneration in either case: but this is a widely different question from that of the laws by which the divine influence in conversion, and in the phenomena attending conversion, may be said to operate. In this latter case, we

may be allowed to show that the divine agency works upon our minds according to the laws already observable in our mental economy.

When emancipated from any particular opinion, or impression, the spirit is liable to feel a sort of resentment at the cause by which it was bound or deceived; and this impels it with more determination and energy in an opposite direction. It aims to show and embody to itself its antipathy, and out of a kind of instinctive abhorence, naturally felt for that which has injured us, we depart to the greatest possible distance, and determine to render our opposition as decisive and clear as possible; just as the side that has been once wounded will be the point most anxiously guarded; and as the sight of the rock on which the mariner has formerly split, will inspire an intenser caution whenever the place is again approached. The new opinion, or new bias, or new impression, which has superseded an old one, will also, by a law of association, that of contrast as well as that of memory, naturally awaken the thought of the former bias, and all the evils, be they many or few, which the mind may now connect with its former state. When these recur they will be accompanied with feelings of disgust and repugnance, proportioned to the satisfaction the mind may feel in its new acquirements, and regulated by the degree of importance attached to the exploded error and the acquired truth. These are laws which obtain in the whole economy of mind, and, therefore, I apprehend, are as strictly applicable to the case I have attempted to explain, as to any of the more common and less momentous changes to which human spirits are subject.

But to return to our narrative. After the death of his aunt Merchant, John Cooke continued to board six months longer with his uncle, destitute of all employment; for no attempt whatever appears to have been made by his professed guardian, to find him any sort of occupation. His mental history, however, through all this gloomy and discouraging period, is interesting, since it was preparatory to that work of the Lord which was soon to be effected. His uneasy and discouraging circumstances, his uncle's indifference, and the total disappointment of all his expectations in business, produced a dejection and gloom which increased daily till his existence became irksome. He longed to be free from his uncle, and to escape from the wretched *ennui* of idleness, but no door of escape opened to him; no possibility of procuring

a suitable employment appeared within his reach, and his mind turned upon itself in anxiety, vexation, and fear. He began to think of death. It seemed perpetually present to his imagination. He felt forsaken and without a friend in an unfriendly world. All men seemed his foes. Nothing prospered, and he felt that he lacked the blessing of God. This naturally introduced the thought of sin against his maker. He began to fear that he had made the most High his enemy; but his views were all obscure and perplexed. For several weeks he dreaded the approach of night; and the idea of bed or sleep proved a terror to him, for his dreams were full of vengeance, and became a sort of mental realization of his waking fears. His companions by day, were guilt and gloom; and by night, death, and judgment, and hell seemed waiting to complete the bitterness and anguish of his sensations.

This singular method did God take to bring home the thought and the fear of death: it was constantly present to his mind. Conscience rose up to accuse him for his past life, and to bring all his sins in review. So dreadful were his dreams and sensations of wrath in his sleep, that he resolved for some time not to enter his bed. He says, "before I heard any Gospel sermon, many circumstances prepared for it. I was terrified with the most alarming dreams, for near three weeks, until I feared my bed as hell. I dreamed but one thing every night, namely, as soon as my senses were locked up by sleep, I thought I felt the devil with two hands on my neck, and his knees on my breast; and when I awoke from this hell upon earth, so strong was it upon my imagination, that I could but cry out with all my strength, for some time, Murder! Murder!—This method God took with Job to hide pride and self-sufficiency from him. This immediately set me to pray. Sometimes I read nearly all the Psalms through before I entered my bed, and thus became a Pharisee of the strictest sect. But this not answering the end, he suffered me not to rest here, but soon sent a messenger more alarming, with "heavy tidings" to me, even to me!

In this state of mind he used to roam from one end of London to the other. But all this time his sense of his spiritual wants was increasing. He had a desire to be religious, and he wished to engage himself with pious people. But he knew none such. In this vague, dark, and restless state of mind, he one day entered, without serious purpose, a place of worship. The minister was preaching upon some

alarming subject—the wrath of God against sin, and the terrors of a future judgment, hell, and everlasting damnation. The subject fearfully responded to the state of his mind—"the iron entered into his soul"—and though strange doctrine, strange preaching, and alarming sounds, his conscience said "Amen" to each fearful sentence; and, at the close of the whole, he felt ready to confess, "I am the man."

For a time he was agitated with deep convictions and strong emotions. But it is not in the nature of that which is violent to be lasting. Time greatly modified his feelings and calmed his fears. In fact, for a short period, his convictions wore off, and it seemed likely that they would produce no permanent effect. But at this critical juncture some acquaintance led him to a place, which he then thought little better than a madhouse—the Tabernacle in Moorfields. This was the momentous crisis which brought his mind to a stand, and fixed the seal upon his future character. The minister, who was preaching on that occasion, was Mr. Kinsman of Plymouth. A man whose labours at that period were highly acceptable and useful in the metropolis. The sound of Gospel tidings was quite new. His ears tingled at the strange intelligence, but it was "glad tidings,"—it suited *his* case in all its particulars, and it was proved to be true by the preacher from the Bible, and to his heart, by the Holy Spirit. His joy was great; he embraced the message, and felt alive from the dead. All things had been preparing him to accept the tidings. Old things had been passing away—old confidences—old habits—pharisaical and worldly prospects had been feeding—and now all things became new. It was a mysterious, but divine hand, which led him, by these short and rapid strides, to the knowledge of the Gospel. Nor was it less mysterious that the human agent, which invited and led him to the house of prayer, where he first found the Saviour, should have proved, like most of his other early connexions, a *false friend*. For this man first gained a place in his regard, and then borrowed money of him which he never repaid. There is still remaining among Mr. C.'s papers, a note of hand for money lent to this individual, upon which is written in his own laconic, but expressive way, "*This man first led me to the Tabernacle, and then cheated me of my money.*"

But he had found at the Tabernacle "the pearl of great price;" and from this date commenced his strong desire to publish the grace of the Gospel to others. He now greatly desired to find employment under some good master,

and especially under some minister of the Gospel. He would have entered into any kind of service to have been connected with pious people. But all his attempts as yet proved unsuccessful. It was permitted that he should remain for a short season exposed to many temptations and trials. He had obtained, however, a new light upon the affairs of his soul, and this, while it comforted, afforded direction to his mind, and fitted him to sustain, with greater fortitude, the unusual shocks of trouble to which his youth was exposed.

His uncle, after the death of his wife, had fallen into the most profligate and ruinous habits. It appears that they had received all their nephew's property, which, at parting from his master, amounted to upwards of 80*l.*; that besides, they had dissipated landed property of their own, worth between one and two hundreds a year, and now the unhappy man was entangled with debts, which he was totally unable to discharge, and in consequence was cast into jail. For a time, his nephew pitied his condition, supplied him with money, and shewed him every becoming token of kindness and affection.

While Mr. Cooke's purse continued at his command, all was well. But when the youth found that his property was worse than wasted, that it was devoted to drunkenness and vice, with a set of the vilest companions, he felt it necessary to withhold his generosity. This exasperated his wicked relative, and the result was, the formation of a project to deprive him of all his property at a stroke. The uncle pretended, and made a *deposition upon oath*, to this effect—that his nephew owed him 200*l.* In consequence of this most infamous machination, legal proceedings were immediately commenced. John Cooke received a summons from one of his uncle's creditors, to appear and answer for himself in a court of justice. Unacquainted with all such business, and without a single friend to advise or direct his proceedings, except his heavenly Father, he appeared to answer to the summons, and to abide by the consequences. Conscious integrity and trust in God alone were his support. When he reflected upon the extreme baseness and malice which influenced his enemies, he was indeed filled with fears; and when he saw that his greatest enemy was his nearest relative, and the man who had been enjoying for a year and half the spoils of his estate, he was overwhelmed with grief: but he resolved not to sink under the cruel hand of oppression, without a strenuous effort to defend himself. His cause and himself

he could now confidently commit to Him, whose name is "a Father to the fatherless, out of his holy habitation." The result of the examination was favourable. His simple statement triumphed over the unsupported deposition of his wicked uncle, and he came off victorious. The judge congratulated him upon his escape from the malicious plot, and informed him, that had it succeeded, he would have had between two and three hundred pounds to pay.

The total defeat of this infamous project, together with expenses, which fell upon the prosecutors, appears only to have excited to a higher pitch of wickedness his disappointed foe. Unwilling to allow the innocent victim of his rapacity to escape, he formed, in combination with some other companions as vile as himself, the hellish design of charging against the youth an act of robbery. This plan, had it succeeded, might not merely have put his uncle at once into possession of his little property, but might have brought the young man to an ignominious end, or to exile and disgrace for the remainder of his life. The plot was evidently formed with the intention of enabling his uncle, as next heir, to take possession of the estate. Two pettifogging and unprincipled lawyers were employed to prosecute him upon this new charge. Conscious, however, of the utter falseness of the accusation, they proceeded cautiously.

"They came to me," he says, "like men of Belial, laying upon me this charge—that I had robbed my uncle: the charge should have been, that I had been a rogue to myself to befriend him." Conscious innocence, however, supported him. He feared the desperate foe was prepared to swear away his life; but he was firm in his resolution not to yield to the snare, and was determined rather to die, than voluntarily give up his estate to the cruel foe, whom he had cherished as a snake in his bosom. The charge against him was possibly intended to frighten him, and to induce him to make offers of yielding his property to compromise the accusation, which might have enabled his uncle at once to make good the charge, and thus ultimately have put him in full possession of the estate. The tale of robbery was industriously propagated against him by his uncle and his agents; but it does not appear, from his *memoranda*, that any further steps were taken after the visit of the two lawyers, whose chief object probably was, after alleging the charge, and threatening prosecution, to excite some offer of *compounding*, which would have put them in possession of a very formidable weapon

against him. But his firmness was unshaken. He fell not under all their threatenings; but maintained a determined resolution, rather to die, than submit to the base project of his uncle.

During this stage of the business, and while his uncle was still confined in prison, God employed an instrument for the deliverance of the youth, unknown to him, by which all further proceedings were stayed. A gentleman went to visit the uncle, to whom he told the tale of his nephew's robbery. The gentleman, though an entire stranger to the nephew, inquired very particularly into the charge, and questioned him closely as to what his nephew had stolen. He hesitated long, and could return no satisfactory replies to the gentleman's questions; who, it seems, before he departed, being convinced that the charge was unfounded, cautioned the guilty man to take care how he proceeded, for that his own life would be endangered, if his charge should fail, and his malicious design against his nephew's life become apparent. These remarks made a powerful impression upon the uncle's mind. His covetousness had blinded him to his own danger; but now his courage failed him, and he relinquished the cruel and infernal project.

It was no slight comfort to our friend, during this trying period, that he had found out the way of a sinner's access to God, and was put in possession of those holy and gracious principles, which are adequate to support the believing soul "in the floods of great waters." He continued to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel at the Tabernacle, Moorfields. Every thing external and internal had contributed to prepare him to receive the word with gladness. His advancement in knowledge and comfort was rapid. The peculiarity of his situation enhanced the sweetness of the gospel; and the desperate wickedness of the world, as well as the severity of his trials, endeared to him the freeness and all sufficiency of divine grace. It was at a period of the greatest danger and of the greatest distress, that this heavenly light had descended upon his path. This gave it a distinctness, a brilliancy of contrast, a character of *timely* interposition, almost bordering on miracle, which contributed to settle and mature his faith into a strong and comforting assurance almost from the first. It was as difficult for such a man to doubt his conversion as to forget or doubt an escape from a shipwreck.

The base treatment he had received from his uncle, of course separated him entirely from all further acquaintance

or dependence; and happily for him, other prospects and other connexions, which were appointed in Providence to regulate the remainder of his life, soon presented themselves. It was, however, a severe trial to a youth of nineteen, whose nature was peculiarly affectionate, and whose regard for his relatives had been intense, to be now abandoned, without father, mother, or brother, and under such circumstances of painful alienation from the only relative on earth to whom he could look for advice. But these trying circumstances were evidently designed to educate his mind for the great work to which God had destined him, and for the attainment of that peculiar character, which eminently distinguished him among his brethren, and fitted him for remarkable usefulness in the Church of Christ.

It appears that, after attending at the Tabernacle some time, and finding his mind increasingly interested in the truths of religion, he resolved to unite himself to that society of Christians, and accordingly applied to the minister for a ticket of admission to the Lord's Supper. This, of course, led to some inquiries on the part of the minister, to whom he told the state of his affairs, as well as the state of his mind. This conversation appears to have excited for him a deep interest in the heart of the excellent minister, the Rev. Mr. Glascott, who was then officiating as a supply at the Tabernacle. The interview resulted in his obtaining a ticket of admission to the Lord's Supper; and, in a recommendation to call speedily upon the Rev. Matthew Wilks, who was then the resident minister of the place, and to make him acquainted with all the circumstances of his case. This kind friend took up the young man's case with affectionate concern. Possibly his discerning eye saw the bud of future excellence, and cherished the hope of one day seeing him a polished shaft in the Lord's quiver. If this supposition be true, how exquisite must have been the gratification of that venerable man, to see that blossom open into such beauty, and disseminate such fragrance, and at last ripen into such mellowed and abundant fruit. The result of his interview with Mr. Wilks was highly favourable. It happened at this very crisis, that the Rev. T. English of Wooburn, an intimate friend of Mr. Wilks, wrote to him to request he would recommend him a young man of piety and talents to assist him in his school. John Cooke appeared to Mr. Wilks a suitable person, and he accordingly procured for him this situation.

The business of tuition, though in its most ordinary departments, was an occupation so totally different from his previous prospects in life that he undertook it with some hesitation and fear. It was, however, both agreeable to his natural taste, and highly propitious to the important, mental, and spiritual change he had recently undergone. He now committed himself to the guidance of that powerful hand which had kept him during the period of his ignorance, and which had safely conducted him amidst the wily and perilous snares which his foes, under the name of friends, had spread for his unpractised feet.

His removal to Wooburn introduced him at once to an entirely new world. But the change was effected so easily, and his mind appears to have fallen so readily into the routine of his new engagements, and to have adapted itself so happily to the aim of divine Providence, that we cannot but conceive he must have previously felt his farming occupation to be irksome, and that some native distaste must have, at least, prepared him to listen favourably to the first proposal of quitting Latchinden; and which must have kept him from availing himself of his friend Laver's invitation, during the long and most anxious period of a year and a half, in which he had been destitute of all employment. He does not, however, appear to have been conscious of any aspiring thoughts, or of any ambition for a less laborious and more intellectual occupation than that of farming; and so low were his spirits, and so wretched his situation, during one considerable period of his abode with his uncle and aunt, that he would have accepted the most menial station to have avoided the uneasiness of an idle body, and the frettings of a vacant mind.

His scholastic engagement with Mr. English was, as might be judged, of rather an humble kind. Though Mr. Cooke had received a plain and useful education at Maldon, he had been instructed in little more than the ordinary branches of an English education, connected with the rudiments of Latin. But he had not been long at Wooburn, before his taste for mental improvement began to display itself. His leisure hours were more carefully and industriously devoted to reading, to devotion, and to literature. Wooburn is a rural and retired village, embosomed in the chalk-hills of Buckinghamshire, but situated in a most lovely and fertile vale, at a distance from great roads and all scenes of traffic and gaiety. It afforded him favourable quiet, and almost unbroken seclusion for the

prosecution of his studies, and for the education of his mind. Mr. English's school consisted of some boarders and day scholars, children of respectable inhabitants, and of his own friends. He was also the pastor of a small church, which had been formed at Wooburn some considerable time before, by the labours of the Rev. T. Grove, afterwards of Walsal, who had been one of the six Oxford students expelled from that University, for praying and reading the Scriptures in private houses; and upon whom Macgowan wrote his celebrated tract, entitled, "The Shaver."

During Mr. Cooke's residence with Mr. English, he prosecuted the study of Latin, and commenced that of Greek, and Hebrew. But he appears to have paid particular attention to the examination of the Holy Scriptures. Whether he enjoyed any assistance in these studies, is, I apprehend, more than doubtful. The difficulties of self-instruction in the learned languages, especially at the period of Mr. Cooke's youth, were so formidable, that it will be readily inferred, notwithstanding the vigour of his mind, his success could not be great. With all the assistance supplied by the abundant apparatus of modern improvements, it is still a task of almost insurmountable difficulty. It will not be expected, therefore, that I should say much of Mr. Cooke's classical attainments. I believe that he acquired just knowledge enough to qualify him to understand and appreciate works on biblical criticism. He, probably, attained to so much acquaintance with Greek, and Hebrew, as to enable him to read the Scriptures in the original tongues. I do not think that he pursued these studies to any length, after entering upon the stated duties of the ministry. The probability is, that in later years he almost totally relinquished them; and this may naturally enough have arisen from never having thoroughly mastered the difficulties of an initiation. I have occasionally glanced at the subject in conversation with him, and have frequently heard him regret the defects, or, more properly, the *brevity*, of his early education*. Indeed he never professed any minute acquaintance with either of the learned languages, and always spoke with modesty and deference upon every point connected with such knowledge.

* I have been informed upon good authority, that the School at Maldon, in which he was educated, was an *endowed Grammar School*, and one of considerable reputation. We may, therefore, infer, that his *initiation* was at least sound. His attention to business, however, had, probably rendered this part of his education comparatively useless.

His residence at Wooburn was, however, a most important event in his life. The providence of God was signally displayed in all its direct results, both in determining the nature of his subsequent engagements, and leading at once to the sphere of his future labour and usefulness. After a short period, it became manifest to Mr. English and some of his principal friends, that Mr. Cooke possessed talents capable of being turned to the service of the church of Christ. He was, accordingly, invited to engage in their meetings for social worship. This led, by degrees, in the ordinary way adopted by dissenters, to a trial of his abilities in village-preaching. The result of the experiment was highly encouraging. His services were acceptable, and edifying to the village-congregations.

Thus he continued, for something more than a year to exercise his talents and to assist Mr. English in his school. Before the lapse of a second year, Mr. English determined on relinquishing his school, and it was, in consequence, proposed that Mr. Cooke should continue it on his own account. The attempt was made, and probably would have succeeded, had not Providence opened other prospects, and pressed upon his mind an engagement of a far higher nature. His occasional services had already excited so much attention, that his pious friends recommended a more serious and devoted attention to the work of the ministry. His talents at public speaking were rapidly developed, and the impression, even of these his earliest efforts, was so considerable, that several stated congregations in the neighbouring towns began to call for his services. While Providence was thus leading him by external circumstances, and the decided approbation of ministers and private Christians, it was no less decisively inclining his mind to the work, and strengthening his attachment to those studies which were connected with the Gospel ministry. All things appeared to certify that he was called of God to minister in holy things. The wisest and best of Christians, who had opportunity of judging, expressed their decided approbation, and rejoiced in the prospect of his growing usefulness. About this period, he was called to officiate in the destitute congregation at Maidenhead; but his first prospects extended no further than an occasional service.

The description of the workings of his mind at this period is highly interesting, and presents a beautiful picture of the powerful and gentle leadings of the Spirit of God. He says,

"During my stay at Mr. English's, the Lord left not himself without witness that he was 'gracious.' My studies were embraced every spare moment, frequently until one or two o'clock in the morning. So close an application to study in my leisure moments, soon brought my body very low. In the evening, my usual walk was round a large field, where (Isaac-like) I used myself to meditation; and God, by this, opening his word to my mind, encouraged me to think of the ministry. But how often has Satan and my diffident heart cast me down. Sometimes I thought I would never attempt it; at other times the Lord enlarged my heart to pray for it; then again, by night, on my bed, or in the field, I would talk upon a subject to myself, and refreshing were such moments. I could not kill the desire, but I was jealous of my deceitful heart. I feared it was pride that excited it. I prayed the Lord to give me a sign, which was this—that if it was his will for me to preach his word, I might have the desire increased; if not, decreased. However wrong I might be in asking, God was gracious in giving, a growing wish to be employed in the sacred work. Fresh discoveries into his word inflamed my mind with a warmer zeal to open my mouth for Jesus."

While these thoughts were working in his breast, he greatly desired to open his mind to a wise and indulgent friend. For reasons which cannot be now ascertained, nor stated if they could, his intercourse with Mr. English was not of that frank and unbosomed kind, which, in the existing crisis of his feelings and prospects, would have been desirable. He was fearful of intimating to any one his wish to be entirely devoted to the ministry, lest it should be thought that he was presuming to aspire to a work for which he had received no qualification, and to which God had not called him. But yet the inward impulse of holy love could not be repressed.

The following interesting document will display the workings of his mind; and the remarkable dealings of Providence with him at this period.

"When I first perceived and felt Christ as my life and my light, I began a new course of action; not by plan, and easy execution of it, but as a child begins his awkward attempt to walk. I felt that I *must* pray, and pray as I felt. I kneeled in my closet, and opened my mouth to God: but not having been on speaking terms with him, I could not 'order my

speech by reason of darkness.' I uttered a few sentences, repeated them, and was exhausted. The verse of a hymn occurred to me, and I uttered it:

'Take my poor heart just as it is,
Set up therein thy throne;
So shall I love thee above all,
And live to thee alone.'

These lines I repeated in every prayer for six months. My petitions increased in number with my conviction and the sense of my wants. My praises advanced with the sensibility of my mercies. I soon increased my requests from four to six, and from six to twelve, but my feelings always exceeded my expressions; and although God accepted my prayers, I was always dissatisfied with them. By reading the Scriptures, hearing the word, observing the workings of my own heart, and hearing the prayers of good men, I learned my own deficiency, and found enlargement in my addresses to God in secret. The first time I was compelled to pray in a family, my spring was dry in three minutes. I wished to hide myself: but a minister present said, 'it was a good beginning, and that although I had more grace than gifts, my grace would increase my gifts, if I exercised what gifts I had.' I was called upon at the prayer-meetings, and always was short, until the duty became a delightful privilege to me, and very acceptable to my brethren. I was sent for to the distressed in mind and afflicted in body, and went on 'from strength to strength.' Other members perceiving the progress and acceptableness of my gifts, called on me to expound a few verses of the Scriptures. I yielded to their requests in my best manner, until report brought my minister to hear me at the shutter. One evening he came in, and I was confused. 'Never mind,' said he, 'if I have destroyed your self-complacency.' I was then called to preach in small congregations, and very soon in his pulpit. The broad seal of heaven was annexed to my youthful testimony, in the conversion of six persons, who joined the church; this so endeared me to the church, that they followed me to every place. 'My peace flowed like a river, and my blessedness like the waves of the sea.' God was my life, and made me the life of the church. I discharged the duty of the deacons in visiting the sick, speaking in the villages, leading the singers, and enlivening the prayer-meetings. My duties were my element; I lived in the region of life and peace."

The glory of God, that God who had so evidently plucked

him as a brand from the burning, lay near his heart. There was a longing of soul to tell the Gospel message to others, which would not be appeased, and which made all the labours of his school an unwelcome and irksome drudgery. His religious connexions, however, at Wooburn, soon endeavoured to relieve his mind from all embarrassment on the point of duty, by unanimously expressing their approbation, and by formally inviting him to engage in the gospel ministry.

As a member of the church of Christ at that place, it was deemed proper that he should receive the sanction of that Christian society, and be publicly called, in their name, to the work of preaching the Gospel. This was accordingly done, at a meeting of the church, when Mr. English, the pastor, delivered an address to his young friend, and a Mr. Blackwell, a respectable and very useful lay preacher, who resided at Loudwater, engaged in the solemn prayer, by which the young man was dedicated to the work of an Evangelist.

He was now frequently engaged, and with great acceptance, in the neighbouring towns of Wycomb, Uxbridge, and Chesham. His ripening talents commanded respect and attention in all the surrounding churches, and upon a renewal of his occasional services at Maidenhead, he received an invitation to preach regularly for six months. He was, however, diffident of his ability to fulfil an engagement for so long a period; and it was not without much deliberation, and fervent prayer for divine direction, that he yielded. He had many anxieties respecting the line of duty generally, and many fears as to the results of the specific attempt he was about to make. The difficulties experienced by our friend at this crisis were not peculiar. The Christian ministry presents to a thoughtful mind a fearful degree of responsibility, and the dread of rashly involving one's self in its tremendous results, is wisely employed by Providence, to sift and purify the motives which induce men to engage in it. Most young ministers of deep piety and serious reflection, when first prompted to undertake this great work, have felt an intense anxiety, and many, who have become singularly useful and eminent, have felt it in the strongest degree. In the minds of some the desire may wax and wane for a long period, but where it is found to be a genuine prompting of the divine spirit, its delay and retardation seem only to give it deeper root. It may also be observed, that the more severely the individual himself is tried, and the greater the difficulties and doubts he has to surmount, in coming to a final decision, the more

calm and unruffled will be his subsequent labours. Those who have concluded hastily, or whose minds have proceeded to the act of self-dedication by a shorter and more direct course, are frequently found, in after life, to doubt their own call; not a few such have been known to sink under difficulties, and some to retrace their steps to private life, or a secular calling. Let no man then rashly put his hand to the plough, neither let him regret the severity or the length of the incipient trial, since it is manifestly adapted to impart stability to his resolution, and to cheer every future scene of his ministry with the exhilarating consciousness of being "called of God, as was Aaron."

Mr. Cooke's mind had been anxiously exercised, in reference to the work of the ministry, from the earliest stage of his religious experience. Young converts, especially if their conversion has been sudden, or very joyful, commonly experience a serious desire to become useful to others, and many aspire to the thought of preaching. But in most cases it is not a permanent desire. Difficulties and fears suppress it; or a consciousness of inability, induced by a little reflection, enforces them to remain in an humbler station. Frequently the desire accompanies our state of "first love," or arises out of the first joyous discovery of the importance and excellence of the Gospel. Then it subsides, as the great themes of redemption lose their novelty, or as the rapture of first enjoyments pass away. But the case was different with Mr. C. Perhaps in this he differed not from most men who have been divinely called to the ministry. His desire to serve God increased as his mind became familiar with the truth. The more he studied the Scriptures, the more enamoured did he become with the grace of the Gospel, and the more zealous to proclaim it to his fellows. His arduous employment had no effect in damping his zeal. Opportunities of mental improvement developed talents of a very peculiar order, and from the crisis of circumstances in which Providence placed him, by seeming to open one door as soon as another was shut, and by making his first attempts at public speaking, so far acceptable as to induce a regular congregation, and a church which had been established nearly a century, to invite him to their pulpit for six months—all these things concurring with the hidden thought of his heart, which had never slept for two years, contributed to give his first step a firmness, a manly port, which marked all his future progress.

It was about the year 1783, and when not more than twenty-

three years of age, that he accepted the first invitation of the church at Maidenhead to supply them for three months. He fulfilled his engagement, but finding, at the expiration of that period, that they were not unanimous, the probation was lengthened to three months more. It appears that the question could not, even then, be decided to the satisfaction of all parties, and he accordingly left them, and returned to his lodging at Wooburn for nearly three months.

In April, 1784, he received another invitation to supply as a candidate at Maidenhead, for six months more. To this he acceded. During either the first or second of these periods of probation, an unhappy disagreement arose between him and the Rev. Mr. English. The history of this painful misunderstanding between two individuals of such acknowledged excellence, and who had previously been so closely connected, may be given in few words. Mr. Cooke had inadvertently expressed some opinions concerning Mr. English to an individual, who betrayed his confidence, and communicated them to a second gossip, who, with various exaggerations and misrepresentations, imparted them to some of Mr. English's friends. Mr. Cooke was charged with having endeavoured to divide Mr. E.'s church, although such a purpose had never entered his mind. Much investigation followed, the result of which was, an acknowledgment, on Mr. C.'s part, of imprudence and a want of circumspection, in having confided his opinions to an individual whom he ought not to have trusted. Mr. English and his friends professed themselves satisfied with his acknowledgments, but subsequently acted in a manner not creditable to their own professions. Mr. E. even went so far as to exert his influence to prevent Mr. C. from settling at Maidenhead, and told some of Mr. Cooke's warmest friends, that they must dismiss him, although Mr. E. distinctly acknowledged that nothing sinful or criminal could be laid to his charge. Such conduct led to great uneasiness and distress of mind on Mr. C.'s part. Some of his professed friends proved themselves bitter and concealed enemies. In the meantime, however, God gave him success. His ministry was greatly blessed, and, notwithstanding all the efforts both of concealed and open enemies, the church maintained its preference for him, and finally invited him to accept the pastoral office.

At this period, so great was his acceptance and usefulness as a preacher, that he received invitations from two other neighbouring congregations—Uxbridge and Chesham. His

inclination and the finger of Providence at last fixed him at Maidenhead, and there he resolved, notwithstanding the severe trials he had experienced in the opposition of some of his first friends, to make his abode.

But so busy had been the tongue of slander, and so inventive the suspicious mind in laying to his charge things of which he was perfectly innocent, that considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining the concurrence of respectable ministers at his ordination. Some objected on the ground of his not having received a college-education, and others on the basis of the vague rumours of his disagreement with Mr. English. But though his feelings were deeply wounded and his faith severely tried by these perplexities at the outset of his course, they appear only to have drawn his soul nearer to God, and to have excited at once the natural firmness of his mind, and the energy of the holy principles he professed. He says, "the scourge of the tongue went deep into my soul." At length, as I was mournfully musing in the bitterness of my soul, Job's words saluted my ear, and their salutary effects I felt warmly upon my heart—'the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' The next morning I told Mr. English that I could, with a happy resignation, give him up. He told me it was one thing to say Job's words, and another to feel them. I answered, that I could both say them and feel their power. You were my friend, said I: the Lord gave you, he knew what end you would answer, how long your friendship should continue. The Lord that gave you has taken you away. Blessed be his name, as much for the latter as the former.—The voice of God now seasonably said 'All things shall work together for good.' I could appeal to God with Peter, that I loved him. I saw by faith my title to that promise. Its extensive nature, 'all things' came with sweetness. I saw that this was one of the ingredients in the ALL; and by great and small, yea, and *contrary* means, God *makes* them work *together*, not *alone*."

It is gratifying to be able to state, that this painful alienation of these excellent men was subsequently removed, and that they lived in the interchange of neighbourly and brotherly kindness for many years. I find from Mr. C.'s papers, that he frequently preached for Mr. English in the latter period of that gentleman's ministry. The prejudices, however, excited at this time in the minds of some good men, through the influence of Mr. English's friends, threw considerable obstacles

in Mr. Cooke's way, when he began to make arrangements for his ordination. He was several days in London, and during that period underwent the severest mental anguish, from the hesitation or refusals of different ministers, before he could find one disposed to bestow upon him the requisite sanction. Even in the connexion where he first received the knowledge and comfort of the truth, he met with unkind repulses. Still John Cooke, though at the early age of twenty-four, was not to be overcome by suspicions and charges, which he knew to be groundless. He, therefore, silently bore the opposition of friends and enemies; left his righteous cause in the hands of God; and proceeded to invite the aid of some liberal minded and candid man, who scrupled not to give his sanction to a brother who had been to no college but that of Jesus Christ; and who would, for the sake of justice and religion, take upon himself the trouble of investigating the unfounded suspicions which the tongue of calumny had raised.

Such an upright and noble spirited friend he at last found in the Rev. Joseph Barber, then pastor of the old dissenting church in Aldermanbury Postern. Mr. Cooke happened to call upon him in the evening. He was a bluff, but kind-hearted man; plain in his address, but venerable, and very open and frank in his manner. He received the youth, and heard his request; listened to his recital of his difficulties and trials, for Mr. Cook did not conceal his peculiar circumstances, nor dissemble his lack of academic honours. To all these things Mr. Barber listened, and put many inquiries. At length he invited Mr. C. to engage in family prayer. He consented, and led the devotions in such a strain of Christian sentiment and feeling, as delighted the venerable pastor. "Well, young man," said he, rising from his knees, "don't be discouraged: if no other ministerial brother will unite with me, I will ordain you myself alone; for I am persuaded God hath endowed you for the work." This cheered the spirits of the youthful applicant, and he returned home satisfied and contented. Mr. Barber, to attain satisfaction and adequate testimonials, investigated the charges which had been whispered against Mr. C. This scrutiny terminated in his cordial approbation and hearty concurrence in the ordination, which took place at Maidenhead, on the 1st of October, 1784. The ministers who assisted were, the Rev. Joseph Barber, the Rev. John Winter, of Newbury, the Rev. Robert Winter, now D.D., of London, and the Rev. Mr. Noon, of Reading.

From the period of his ordination, an eminent blessing at-

tended the labours of Mr. Cooke. The church and congregation increased, many signs of good accompanied his ministerial exertions, and a pleasing spirit of piety and zeal pervaded his congregation. In less than a year, the old meeting-house was found much too small to accommodate the increasing numbers, which his ministry attracted, both from the town and the neighbouring villages. Proposals were set on foot by the people themselves for a new and larger place of worship. Divine Providence had by this time given him great favour in the eyes both of his own people and those of the neighbouring churches; his services were highly esteemed, and frequently sought in other places; and those difficulties and trials which at first perplexed and impeded his steps were removed, or gradually mitigated. The people manifested a strong attachment, and liberally contributed among themselves the whole sum requisite for the erection of a substantial and commodious chapel, capable of accommodating about 700 persons. A great burden of care and anxiety was the consequence of this undertaking; but he had the satisfaction of seeing the building at length completed, and opened for divine worship, on the 18th of September, 1785. His diary contains some very interesting remarks and reflections, written on or near the day of the opening, which, as they are strikingly characteristic of the man, I shall here introduce.

"Sunday, September 18, 1785. This day our new meeting-house was opened, having been completed in less than a year. How many fears possessed my throbbing heart. I reasoned, I prayed, I strove, and all too little to embolden a mind sensible, deeply sensible of its own weakness, and the greater talents possessed by those I expected would hear me. Let me enrol this convenient place for the worship of my God among my many favours from Heaven. Let it be as another cord twisted with the rest to bind my soul to the warmest gratitude, and the most cheerful obedience to my Maker's laws. The place is not for man, but the Lord God. The materials, the money, all were the Lord's. Of his own have we given him. I bless the Lord for blessing the people with a willing heart. May they never be one farthing the poorer for what they have given. It was first proposed by my friend * * *. I nourished the thought with fear and trembling. It was no sooner proposed by us to the subscribers than assented to. They all contributed cheerfully, to all appearance, who did contribute any thing; and the Lord loves a cheerful giver. How reasonable, how becoming is it, that the eternal owner

of the universe should have such an acknowledgment paid him by his creatures, for he hath given us body, soul, and every comfort.

"2. Some have wished us embarrassed in money matters; thank God they are disappointed; and I pray my God to impress the sin upon their minds, and then forgive it for ever.

"3. The builder, himself a subscriber, and long a professor, has acted in an arbitrary, ungrateful manner; has led us into many unnecessary expenses: and had he not been opposed would have gone further. This proves, that though God's children should be harmless as doves, they ought to be wise as serpents. Carnal professors will cheat real Christians. As soon as the building was finished, this man lost the job of building a private dwelling-house through his unprecedented conduct. This was God's requiting hand.

"4. Two of the subscribers to the old meeting refused to subscribe to this. No work for God meets with the approbation of all.

"5. One of the subscribers to the old meeting opposed us at every step from first to last, and pleaded that the old meeting would last our lives. The Lord change and forgive his narrow mind, and grant him a greater regard for God, his cause, and posterity. This man has shown me how little he believes in his Bible, and has made me pray much for him, and the church especially, when the building was going on.

"6. The men employed in the work were very dishonest. Almost every meal they stole time; twice, nay three times, their allowed time. We or the master must be cheated. Poor souls, I pity them, and think of the reckoning day they have to meet.

"7. It cost half as much again as was supposed. How few count the cost before they begin in soul matters! How liable to mistake on this side death and eternity. The weather was extremely favourable, especially at the first, and seemed to say, 'go forward.'

"8. One poor wicked man in the town who envied us the place, found his envy and malice increasing every time he passed the meeting, and at last wished somebody would join with him, and he would burn it to the ground. I bless the Lord that he prevented him, and brought the man to the old meeting, and seized his rebellious heart. He now sees, feels, and trembles under his guilt. He is pricked to the heart. The Lord forward his work in him!

"9. My soul often feared the people would be too much

elated with it; but I think the fall of *** has made us walk with fear and rejoice with trembling. I am sure it has me at least.

"10. How often when walking by it have I thought, well if God should take me to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; how cheerfully should I sacrifice my wish of preaching in this new meeting!

"11. In the morning it was opened, at the prayer meeting, three engaged in prayer, and all shut up through fear. This rather added to my discouragement.

"12. After reading a chapter, I found much liberty in my first public address to God in that place, but such an effect had my fear, and the smell of the paint on my body, that had not God sent a neighbouring minister to engage for me in the afternoon, I doubt whether I could have gone through the day's work. Many came who never heard before. God will be just in their aggravated ruin, if they never hear again. I hope the poor builders will not be shut out of the ark. Nor the subscribers to the meeting be a mere scaffold to God's church! May the inhabitants of Maidenhead never find their hell the hotter for this convenient place of worship."

Thus auspicious was the commencement of Mr. Cooke's labours in the ministry. Although a young man, he had undergone such trials as entitle him to be described as already old in experience, and in the knowledge of the world. Bitter as were the sufferings he had endured, they were of inestimable importance in fitting him for that species of public station, which has a special and intimate connexion with the human heart, and the characters of men. Few young ministers enter upon that important office with such insight into human nature, or with the same measure of practical discrimination and decision. His period of retirement at Wooburn had been sedulously improved; and though his stock of knowledge was not large, and his educational advantages, among the least which Providence had bestowed, yet he entered upon his widening sphere of labour, in full possession of all the most material requisites for the successful discharge of the ministerial function.

From the date of the erection of his new meeting-house, his course was one of exemplary piety, of eminent and extensive usefulness, and of the anxious and painful cultivation of personal piety. His public career as a preacher became highly encouraging. His popularity increased both at home and abroad, with the improvement he was enabled

to make, in all the qualifications of a preacher and a pastor. But lest he should be exalted above measure, God left him not free from the thorn which daily reminded him how weak a thing is man, and how vain a thing is all the world, without God. In the midst of his ministerial prosperity, and while many were rejoicing in his light, he fell into great dejection and distress.

Several causes conspired to produce this mental uneasiness. There were some who had professed a warm and sincere attachment to his ministry, whose love turned into hatred; there were others, who wished him to say peace, when there was no peace; and there were some who even acted the assassin's part—and while they approached with smiles, aimed to plant a deadly blow. His own spirit was too tender, and his nature too generous; and therefore sometimes he was wounded, and sometimes he was oppressed. But the Lord stood by him, as by Paul of old, and made his enemies often ashamed before him. He shrunk not from all the trials incident to the faithful discharge of his Master's work: but irrespective of the favour of any man, and in the fear of no man's frown, he laboured to approve himself unto God.

There was always in Mr. Cooke a singular measure of fidelity, but mingled with kindness, in administering reproofs: yet these are what the professors of Christianity can least patiently tolerate. Few men could offer reproof with more affection, and none with more point; yet he often made himself secret and malignant enemies, by his conscientious attention to this part of what he conceived to be his duty. At the outset of his ministry, his reproofs and admonitions stung and exasperated some of his professed friends into the bitterest and most deadly antipathy. Some whose unholy lives or base actions he had detected, treated him with scorn, or sought revenge upon the disturber of their false peace, by endeavouring to blast his fair fame. Though these things effected no change in the bulk of his congregation, and never for a moment shook or intimidated the steadfastness of his resolution, yet they filled his soul with grief, and often struck a barbed and poisoned arrow to his heart.

But, in addition to all this, it must be recorded, that his own soul was brought into darkness and fear—deep darkness, and confounding fear. Severe temptations of various kinds were allowed to harass his spirits; and for a length of time his religious alternations became extreme. Perhaps few

persons have gone through deeper waters of soul-trouble. He describes himself, in his papers, as frequently sunk for days together—sometimes for weeks or months, into an abyss of mental agony and perplexity. His was no feigned affliction of the spirit, nor fanatical and hypocritical self-abasements—for they were secret. His papers now reveal them: and his friends, in his later years, have heard him refer to them, but at the time they were invisible—"the soul's dread secret"—the worm that inwardly consumed the bud of his hopes and his joys. He could say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." All the time, he appears to have proceeded in the duties of his office, without manifesting any of those inward convulsions of soul that frequently went nigh to shipwreck his hopes, or tear up the whole course of nature. Happily for him, in all these bitter conflicts, he appears never to have lost sight of the throne of grace; or if, for a short season, he restrained prayer, through the fear that he was a reprobate, yet hope soon revived, and the humble penitent spirit of the child brought him back, with deeper contrition and more earnest entreaties, to his Father's throne of grace.

But this long and dreary season of fiery trial was designed at once, to give an insight into his own moral and spiritual weakness, and to enhance to his feelings, as well as to his judgment, the delivering grace which he was called to preach to others. His happiest talent, that of touching powerfully the tenderest point in each man's case, of probing at once, the chief seat of a sinner's trouble, he doubtless acquired, in this long and dreary interval of perplexity. It made him know himself, and thereby all others. It led him to search the Scriptures with anxious and persevering solicitude; it contributed to confirm, by severely trying his faith; it gave him a minute insight into Satan's devices, and it taught him, by dire necessity, to become a wrestling Jacob. From this long refinement in the furnace of temptation, he came forth, fitter for the master's use. His self-knowledge and self-control were eminently promoted by the conflict, and from it resulted, in an eminent degree, that weight and gravity of speech—that tendency to useful conversation, and determinate resistance of levity, for which he became distinguished. The following extract from his diary, written when he was in part extricated from the entanglements of the temptation, will illustrate its beneficial effect, and the deep concern which it produced to turn every opportunity of doing good to the best of uses.

"April, 20, 1785. My soul, remember, the pinnacle of honour you stand on is the highest of all offices in this lower world! Watch over thy conversation, and let it be *grave* as to the *manner* of it; humble and sincere in the *intention*. Never speak without a good design. Let the *subject* be profitable to men's souls in *special;* because, this is thy peculiar office. Avoid those light and trifling tales, that defile thy memory, and deaden thy affections. Render what is spoken acceptable, by an amiable manner, that shall *engage* rather than *disgust*. Let others know, by the kindest replies, that you regard what they say, and endeavour to graft some important hint upon their observations, that may give it both weight and lustre; and be sure not to arrogate any glory to self."

"Remember, also, that the eyes of all are upon thee. 1. The eyes of the world. They have an envious eye: it watches for thy halting, and lingers for thy sin. How will they exaggerate it? It will not be the same when it comes round to thee again. 2. The eyes of *almost-christians*: and they are glad to glut their eyes with your faults, and make them some excuse for their own. 3. The devil's eye is very narrowly watching to get an errand to God against you, —matter to stain Christ's cause; to harden the wicked, and trouble and weaken your own soul. 4. The eyes of Christians are looking to every motion of your life, for something more than others, and meet with a discouraging disappointment without it, to your disgrace. And 5. God's omniscient eye is upon thee, while his promise follows thee with its encouraging voice. "To him that orders his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God." And "Every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof, in the day of judgment." A book of remembrance is written. The Lord hearkens. They are my jewels, saith he. O for such a savour of divine things! that I might make known the truth of Solomon's assertion, that "the well-spring of wisdom is as a flowing brook." May my heart burn within me, while I thus speak, and my tongue be as choice silver. That speaking out of the abundance of my heart, I may find my words as *goads* to others in their way to heaven."

The bitter conflict to which I have so largely referred, continued for many months. Occasionally he recovered a peaceful frame, and attained to a good hope; but again the enemy came in like a flood. In some portions of this gloomy season, the very principles of his faith, and the evidence of experience itself, was shaken. The foundation of all religion

seemed to give way under him, and he was impelled even to doubt the being of a God. It required the most strenuous efforts of mind, to shake off his doubts; the most earnest wrestlings of prayer, to keep the soul from making shipwreck of faith; and the most vigorous struggles of hope, to retain its standing upon a single point of consolatory truth. As this trial of our friend's faith and grace was so long and so sharp, and as the review may be profitable to young Christians, and especially to young ministers, I shall be forgiven for indulging in a few remarks, which the examination of Mr. Cooke's diary has suggested.

I have frequently observed, that persons who enter into the ministry soon after conversion, especially if that conversion has been accompanied with strong emotions, or high mental excitement, are very liable to suffer great distress, and to encounter severe temptations upon the question of personal religion, to which those have been strangers whose introduction to the ministry has not taken place till after some years of Christian experience. In most cases of sudden and rapid conversion there is effected so joyful a translation from darkness into light, and this is followed or accompanied with so vigorous an apprehension of the power and triumphant efficacy of Divine grace, that the soul seems to have already accomplished its victory. There is so palpable and overpowering a reality given to the things of God and the soul, that the darkness and unbelief, which are the sources of so many sins and falls, are scarce perceived. The mind is borne away from the low and sordid atmosphere of this base world, and lives in an element of pure and ardent devotion. The love of Christ is shed abroad so sensibly and vigorously that the whole soul is drawn forth in ardent longings and devout aspirations in return. Hence such persons, while in this state of mind, can neither sympathise with the experience of the less ecstatic Christian, nor comprehend what is meant by the conflict and the fight of faith. They are yet unaware of Satan's devices and of the possible extent of their operation upon their own hearts. They have seen the loveliness of the Saviour, but they have not yet felt, by painful experience, the importance of his *supporting* grace; they have felt the efficacy of atoning blood, and triumphed in the righteousness which makes the sinner just; but they have yet to feel the mighty working of God's power towards them that believe; and they have yet to learn, one by one, how many roots of bitterness and seeds of sin their nature contains, and how

hard and painful is the task of extracting these roots, in their minute fibres and endless ramifications, from the soul. The season of spiritual light and joy which succeeds a conversion of this sort is frequently of considerable length; and after the soul has been familiarised to it, the return of sin and Satan's power seems, by the very fact of contrast, to be more formidable than it really is. The violence with which sin sometimes revives, the unexpected assaults which the enemy watches to make, as well as the unsuspecting state of the soul, all contribute to give force to the assault, and to incapacitate the inexperienced believer for the conflict. At first he is astonished and confounded to find the power which sin still retains over him. He thought it all but dead, and never anticipated its revival or its fierce return to enslave him again; and he is driven by the reverting current of depravity upon the very borders of despair. The more sincere he has been, in his former experience, the more hopeless and desperate appears his present condition. He immediately begins to suspect his over-profession—deems his past experience mere delusion—while the yet raging power of sin he feels to be a reality which indeed inflicts the deepest grief, and convinces him that he is a slave sold under sin. In proportion to his former elevation, is now his depression; and as he had most unsuspectingly before felt assured of his title to glory, so now, by a very natural law of our constitution, his disappointment and anguish are the greater at the supposed discovery, that his conclusion was false, and his feeling delusive.

How much of sin remains in our nature after the grace of God has employed its renovating energy, and how secretly and subtilly it will enslave the soul and obscure the evidences of its acceptance, has to be discovered by slow degrees. There are few young Christians aware, in the first stage of their experience, how violently sin will revive and how fiercely their spiritual foes will re-assault them. It may be wisely ordered that they should not know;—it has the effect of preventing discouragement and allowing the soul to expatiate more fully and less timidly over the freeness of divine grace. Yet the fierce temptations which ensue have a most valuable influence upon their minds, in removing whatever may adhere to them of vain confidence in their own experience, and of dissipating at least that portion of their hope which was not solidly grounded on the simple testimony of Revelation. Christians who have been the subjects of that kind of conversion we are now noticing, are liable to attribute great import-

ance to frames and feelings. In some such cases religion is rather a matter of mere feeling than of sober and grave conviction. There is less of thought and judgment, and more of emotion and imagination, than comports with stability—more of the effervescence of the human passions than of the durable workmanship of God. Hence these airy particles must be driven away, these visionary emotions must be dissipated, and the foundation for future advancement to maturity, and future stability amidst the conflicts of life, be laid more deeply and solidly. But the storms which shake and radicate the heart in this happy stability, are sometimes sharp and long, and, according to the peculiar character of the individual, admit of considerable modification. If he has been sanguine, his trial will be the sharper, but not so deep and grave; while individuals of a more meditative and intellectual character will be driven back beyond the mere doubts of their own experience, to question the reality and truth of religion itself. They will probably be tried with sceptical and infidel doubts, and for a length of time the uncertainties and suspicions of their own feelings, may cast a shade over the very principles of religion itself, and bring into doubt the inspiration of the word of God. This is even more likely to be the case with ministers than with private Christians. In proportion to the greater ardour of devout love which impelled their first and early self-dedication to the work of the Lord, will be the horror of soul they feel at the discovery of their own baseness; and, in the same degree will the shock of reviving sin and temptation, tend to weaken and impair the very foundations of their faith. Nor is it to be forgotten, that while such young ministers are among the most promising instruments for making inroads upon the kingdom of Satan, the malice of that enemy will be the more bitterly excited against them. In their fall, or even in the perplexity of their faith, he gains a triumph more essential and valuable to him, than when he shakes the faith of many an every-day professor. The nobler the object, the greater the achievement which carries it captive: and, as a wise general will not waste his strength upon weak posts, but aim directly at the main body of his foe, so the adversary of the church, in weakening the hands, or discouraging the heart, or shaking the faith of a Christian minister, and that one a man of exemplary zeal and energy, accomplishes a distinguished triumph over the cause against which his subtlety and his malignity are unweariedly employed.

Such was the distressful situation of our friend for a length of time, struggling against the power of sin and unbelief, dejected and discouraged by the discovery of his own subjection to earthly objects, and led by the darkness which these evils produced, first, to doubt the divinity of the Saviour; then to question the inspiration of the Scriptures. He describes himself at times as being obliged to pause and revert to first principles, and to compel his mind to go through long and laborious trains of thinking and reasoning, before he could believe that there was a God. The cause of these terrible convulsions I ascribe, in his case, to an ardent natural temperament, to his strong passions, to the immaturity of his knowledge, and the elevated station he had acquired, almost before experience and discrimination of judgment had fitted him to bear the shocks and storms, which blow alike from all quarters against the Christian minister, and with agitating violence against the most useful and faithful.

Many circumstances concurred to embitter the cup of which he was made to drink so largely, within the three first years of his ministerial career. The alienation of the man who first encouraged his public engagements; the temptation to various kinds of errors; the treachery of some of his first and warmest friends, with other evils, all seemed to conspire at once to plunge him into an abyss of wretchedness. What he endured from false friends may be in some degree imagined from the following brief, but affecting memorials contained in his diary.

"What an extreme folly it is to sin against God! He is the only unchangeable friend in the universe! What superlative folly, therefore, to incur his displeasure, by backsliding from him! The man in whom I placed the most firm confidence, behaves now as cool as an enemy. I have very often lately, felt the force of this exclamation—'a faithful man, who can find?' I begin to despair of doing it. Happy those who find an interest in a faithful God. My present experience says, 'cease from man.' *Hard* lesson! to cease from the *dearest* man! yet a *necessary* one. Lord, 'tis thus 'thou teachest to profit, and leadest in the way I should go.'—This morning I have finished the prophet Jonah. I have heard of good done to souls. One brought from the fort of free-agency, and another from the broad road. If this is all the good done by it, I am thankful for the honour of being made useful. Many unfair remarks have been made upon my

discourses by a principal foe, and a few who adhere to him. But, I have noon-day evidence that my sermons are too close to his conscience, and besetting sin, to find his approbation. Be this as it may, that opposition and censure are to be my lot, yet the Lord lifts up my head, above my enemies round about. And why should I distrust him for the present and future? Lord be on my side and I will not fear! 'What can man do to me?'"

Severe as were his trials from without, those from within were of a more fiery and excruciating nature. There is a force and a tenderness, a heart-melting intenseness in his delineations of his own mental anguish, which, were I to transcribe it into these pages, would but distress without edifying the reader. It is more desirable now to pass from these affecting details to view the results of the trial, in that holiness, spirituality, and consistency, to which he subsequently attained. For these throes and convulsive struggles of his energetic mind appear, in the issue, but as the *birth-pains* of that future eminence and stability of character, which blessed and comforted so many, and which remained unsullied and unshaken to the end of life.

Before I proceed, however, to this more pleasing part of my duty, it may not be unsuitable to introduce some circumstances connected with this early period of his public history.

About the time of his ordination, he became acquainted with that singular character, William Huntington. One of Mr. C.'s early friends introduced him to Maidenhead. He subsequently preached several times in Mr. C.'s pulpit. Although our friend was by no means satisfied with Mr. Huntington's style of preaching, nor with his religious sentiments, yet a slight acquaintance commenced, and Mr. Cooke was soon after invited to preach to Mr. H.'s congregation in Providence chapel, Titchfield-street, London. It appears from Mr. Cooke's diary, that he preached there in June 1785, being then but a young man, and Mr. Huntington rapidly rising to the very zenith of his popularity. It is, however, to be remarked in explanation of Mr. C.'s connexion with him, that Mr. H. at this period was very far from having reached that pitch of arrogance, and that extreme of doctrinal perversion to which he subsequently attained. Moreover, our friend Mr. Cooke, at that period, was in all probability, not aware of the tendency of some of Mr. H.'s errors; he was himself but a young divine, and though a powerful preacher, had as yet

attained but a scantling of that theological knowledge which distinguished his maturer age. It is not improbable, that the strain of Mr. C.'s preaching then, though far enough from the conceits and lawless interpretations of Mr. H., was yet more exclusively doctrinal, than it afterwards became. It was probably his reputation as a powerful preacher of the free and sovereign grace of the Gospel, that induced Mr. H. to invite him to his pulpit. This brief explanation seemed necessary, first, to account for the fact of his having been connected with a character, from whom he was in most respects so dissimilar; and, secondly, for the sake of introducing the anecdotes which refer to the final disruption of their friendship. The following statement I had many years ago from Mr. C. himself.

He had been preaching for Mr. H. one sabbath-day, while he was employed elsewhere, but was engaged to remain in town to spend some part of the ensuing day at Mr. Huntington's house. They accordingly met. Our young friend was in many respects interested in Mr. H.'s society. His conversation was in the main religious, and is generally allowed to have been ingenious and striking. Mr. Cooke had already been startled somewhat by several of his notions, but listened with deference to a man of so high a character, and of so great pretensions to superior knowledge.

At length Mr. Cooke asked the dogmatical divine, his opinion of the tenth commandment, particularly he meant as to its extensive application to the indulgence of desires and wishes for various things, which the Providence of God had denied us. He especially asked Mr. Huntington, whether he did not think that Christians frequently violated that commandment, by wishing for what they did not possess, or by being discontented with their lot? Mr. Huntington, who was by nature a master of sarcasm, at these words of the inquiring youth, drew himself up in his seat into that kind of stiff, erect position, which the body assumes when it wishes to act disdain, and turning his head aside, with a sneer, as unworthy of his pretensions to superior knowledge, as it was of his ministerial character, he said, "you fool! you fool! You know nothing at all about it—that commandment, Sir,—why, that, Sir, is God the Father speaking to Christ the Son!"

At this extraordinary discovery, Mr. C. could not refrain from expressing his astonishment, and begged to know, how this infallible dogmatist could make this sense plausible. The explanation he received was this—"I tell you it is God

the Father, speaking to Christ the Son:—'thou shalt not covet'—that is, none of the reprobate—thou shalt be satisfied with the elect!" This was quite sufficient for Mr. Cooke. He found it hopeless to argue with such an opponent; but as speedily as possible, he wished his oracle "good day."

From this interview he wisely concluded, that it would be desirable for him to forego all further intercourse with Mr. Huntington. He could have no brotherly communion with a man, who could thus abuse the plainest and least disputable portions of the word of God, to make them countenance his favourite doctrine. This, however, was a fair specimen of the outrageous distortions, or spiritualisings, as they would be called, of the Word of God, which constituted one principal cause of the popularity of that strange man. How long Mr. C.'s acquaintance with him lasted, I cannot say, but I am disposed to think, it was but short. The following circumstance, however, which occurred some time after, totally separated the parties. Mr. Huntington wrote to Mr. Cooke, requesting his services at Providence chapel, for a certain Sunday, on which he was to be absent. Mr. Cooke replied respectfully, but stated, that it was not convenient to him to leave his own congregation on that day. Mr. Huntington wrote a second, if not a third letter, in which he employed some strong expressions of indignation at the refusal; and in a tone of most extraordinary arrogance and presumption, literally *commanded him in the name of the Lord*, to obey the summons.

John Cooke was a man to be won by kindness, or persuaded by reason, but not to be commanded by a fallible mortal in God's name; and nothing could have tended more effectually to defeat Mr. Huntington's intentions than such a style of dictation. Of course it produced a peremptory refusal, with a suitable reproof of the insolence which had dictated the command. Thus terminated their intercourse; *friendship* it cannot be called. Mr. Cooke had previously enjoyed but scanty means of judging of Mr. Huntington's sentiments. But what little specimens had come before him, were far from approving themselves to his judgment by the supreme standard. He had, indeed, at first, and while at a distance, formed an exalted opinion of Mr. Huntington's talents and knowledge. He had looked up to him as a master in Israel, and stood prepared, as a youth, to be in-

structed by his superior wisdom and experience.* But a nearer view convinced him that report is no safe guide. He soon perceived that if Mr. Huntington's *Gospel* was true, that which he had been taught must be false. Our friend had acquired too profound a veneration for Scripture and common-sense, and too conscientious a regard to practical godliness, to lend his sanction and his influence to flatter an individual, and support a system, which makes men ten-fold more the children of the devil than they were before. It was, however, a valuable lesson which he had learned, and it was not lost upon him. If there had been previously any lack of discrimination in applying the promises, or any possibility of unholy persons taking comfort from his strong statements of scriptural truth, or any lack of practical exhortation, this occurrence led him to see the abyss of delusion into which the Antinomian plunges, and, it is probable, inclined him to pay special attention to the mental and experimental deliquencies of that fatal system. Few who have heard him touch upon the delusions of the Antinomian heresy can have overlooked the fact, that he had formed peculiarly powerful apprehensions of its opposition to holiness, and of its tendency to foster the worst vices of an unregenerate heart. He dealt in none but powerful blows against the system, and all his thrusts were aimed at the joints of the harness. He meddled little with the theological and metaphysical subtleties of the subject, because these are little fitted for popular conviction, and are too refined for the apprehension of the party; but he grappled with the error as it exists in the heart, and works in the life and character. He stripped it successfully, and at once, of all affinity with that gospel, which is holiness and peace, by placing it by the side of Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

Four years after his ordination he entered into the marriage state. Wisdom and piety had directed his choice to Mary, eldest daughter of Walter Shropshire, Esq., of Hendon, Middlesex. This important event took place on the 16th October, 1788. The pious reflections which the event excited in his mind, as well as the memorial of the manner in which the day was spent, are worthy of insertion here, and will supply an interesting example for the imitation of young Christians.

"October 16, 1788. This day was one of the most im-

* What his mature and deliberate judgment was I shall be able to show in his own words, in a paper to be hereafter introduced; but which appeared too long for insertion at this place.

portant of days to me, relative to temporal affairs. At St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, I was married to one who was given to me in answer to prayer. The preceding evening I felt in family prayer a prelude to a good day. The morning prayer was equally precious, under a sense of the great importance of the connexion I was about to enter. From prayer we went to the church: the ceremony was, to me, peculiarly solemn. My very soul breathed out the petitions for our mutual felicity. From the church we rode to Hendon, round by Whetstone; and with three other friends sung very happily seven Psalms. After dinner we again joined in prayer, to the God of our life, and sung two hymns. I was carried through the day with a serenity and spirituality of mind, far exceeding my expectations. I feel a real desire to render the life of my dear partner really happy, by using every means of directing her soul to God. O, that I may so live with her, and be an help-meet to her, as to bear the recollection of our union in a dying moment with real pleasure. May the Judgment-day bear witness to our mutual fidelity, and spiritual felicity in God and in each other!"

This important connexion formed, and consummated in the fear of God, became, through twenty-five years, a source of great joy and comfort. His partner proved a pious, prudent, and amiable woman; a most affectionate and anxious mother; a fit companion, in every respect, for a laborious preacher of the word of God; able to encourage him in his trials, to advise with him in his difficulties, and to pray for, and *with* him, in his weaknesses, and afflictions. Shortly after the marriage, Mrs. Cooke was united to the Church, at Maidenhead. This was a source of great satisfaction to his mind. In the month of June, 1789, Mrs. Cooke became the mother of twins. The elder of them he named Mary, but she died at an early age. Her removal was a severe stroke to the affectionate father. In a letter written upon the occasion, we have an interesting development of his feelings, and an instructive display of the triumph of faith.

"No, Miss Sally, my dear little daughter, Mary, is no longer mine, for the Lord has 'taken away the desire of mine eyes with a stroke.' Her age and capacity—her tender and affectionate disposition—her being a twin and the first born—connected with many engaging expressions to fond and partial parents—and especially of late, her increasing tender regard to us, discovered in almost every word and action, tended to lay her too near our hearts.

Her death was sudden; and till her breath was evidently departing, I never understood the meaning of the word *Father*. I have sympathized with others under a trial something like my own; but never, never conceived what their expressions meant. Our constitutions and our attachments differ. A friend often feels more for the death of a child than the parent; and some marble-hearted beings are happy to lose their children, that their care and expense may be lost with them. I neither envy their stoical apathy, nor am I capable of imitating it. The exquisite anguish of my soul, for a season after her death, I can never describe; and if I could, tenderly as you loved her, and deeply as you may feel the event, you could not conceive my sensations. I could but associate her with every object I saw or heard. Morning, noon, and evening, brought her image to my view. The parlour, the study, the kitchen, the garden, the town, and the field, had lost a charm. Her past health, her late, though short sufferings, her words, her looks, her actions, her affections, all supplied my mind with fuel to feed the flame of my anguish. Some might say, I also have lost a child, but I did not feel to such a degree; this may be, and has often happened, even in the experience of good men. But what is this, but saying that such an event to them was *no trial*, or a small one. To me, however, it was 'grievous for the present;' and God designed it should be so. Another might wonder that I felt so much pain; but 'my heart knew its *own* bitterness.' Perhaps you may say, where was your *faith* all this time? Truly, if I am any judge of the exercises of my own mind, I never found it, altogether, in such vigorous exercise in my life. This was the Lord's fidelity, who has declared to his believing people, 'as thy day (of trouble or duty) so shall thy strength be.' My mind, under the smart of the separating stroke, was fully assured of this truth, 'as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,' and that 'whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth.' Never was my spirit more sensible of its interest in the unchangeable friendship of God towards it, than under this trial. But this did not destroy the feelings of the man or the parent; but it restrained and regulated both. Not to feel, in such a case, may prove a person a stoic, but not a Christian; not a follower of that Redeemer who dropped the tear of sympathy and friendship at the grave of Lazarus, and 'wept with them that wept.' I bless the Lord, that I did not find myself easy with a bare submission to his will; but longed and waited

for power to triumph and be thankful for the dispensation; a disposition of mind always becoming a 'living man,' much more a redeemed sinner. And sure I am, that I shall review the present scene with lively joy and praise to him who 'afflicts his people for their profit (profit unknown to the wisdom of this world), that they may be partakers of his holiness.' 'The Lord wounds' as deeply and extensively as he thinks best; but he never makes a wound too deep for his own cure; and therefore he declares 'I wound and I heal.' I find these words true; the Lord is healing our wound; but this is not the work of a moment. But 'the Lord gave' my dear child, 'and the Lord hath taken her away' from us and our friends, and from a world of sin, snares and sorrows. He hath taken her from *the evil to come;* and I can truly say 'blessed be the name of the Lord,' who might have taken them all—have taken my wife. So sensibly did I feel the sovereignty and equity, the wisdom and kindness of the dispensation, that if my touching her hand would have saved her life, contrary to the Divine pleasure, I could not, I dare not, I would not have done it. The man and the parent cried, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from my child, and from me;' but as a Christian, I could heartily add, 'nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.' His will is done. I loved my child, and was fond of her company; her *heavenly* Father loved her better, and has taken her to himself. We have trusted her with Mrs. S———, and were going to do it again, for three or six months. In such hands we could trust our child at the distance of twenty-six miles; and shall we not trust her with our covenant God, who made her, gave her, has the greatest right to her? To that God, whose mercy we entreated for her before she was born, and to whose compassionate care we daily surrendered her, she is gone; but not lost. Lost! no I have not lost my child: but only 'parted with her for a season,' that I might enjoy her for ever! Compassionate Redeemer, thy words cheer my spirit—'suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Cheering truth! of such as my dear little Mary, is the kingdom of glory!

'Death did the bands of life unloose,
But can't dissolve Christ's love;
Millions of infant souls compose
The family above;

Their feeble frames his power shall raise,
And mould with heavenly skill;
He'll give them tongues to sing his praise,
And hands to do his will.'

"Had she lived, she would have thanked you for your kindness towards her in the Tontine, and in many other instances; but now let others share it; she needs it not, for 'the Lord is her portion!' a portion which 'neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thief break through and steal.' I have supposed (and the supposition has given me a mixture of pain and pleasure), that you had brought some token of love to her while absent from home. But ah! 'whilst you was busy here and there, she was gone, gone to her long, to her eternal home.' We set our eyes upon that which is not; for God has given her 'wings to fly away, as an eagle towards heaven; beyond our reach, beyond our sight, yea beyond our thoughts. We have another reason to love this world less, and heaven better. Let us wipe our eyes: or if we weep—weep not for her but for ourselves, our children and friends *on earth*. Had she lived, could we have wiped all tears from her eyes? No; we have wiped away many tears, but God has wiped them all away; 'the days of her mourning are ended, and everlasting joy is upon her head.' She is gone 'to her Father, and my Father—to her God, and my God.' She is departed to be with Christ—'with an innumerable company of angels (herself an angel), to the spirits of just men made perfect,' herself as perfect as they! She is now nearer to God than any of her earthly friends; may her death be sanctified to bring them nearer to him. Time is short; but our lives are still shorter. Our health is precarious, and the moment of our death uncertain, and may be as sudden as my dear child's. 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,' whether young or old. And whatever we think, *only* such are blessed *in death*. When 'small and great stand before God, and the judgment is set and the books opened,' may it appear, that my Mary's death was greatly blessed to you, to her friends in general, to her affectionate mother, and to your's with grateful sincerity, her affectionate father,

JOHN COOKE."

Mrs. Cooke subsequently became the mother of three more children. The next born was a son, a child of great interest and promise, but he died at the age of five. The affections of Mr. Cooke were intensely bound to this child. He had already lost both the twins, and, like most affectionate parents who have but a solitary shaft in their quiver, he valued it the more, and hoped it might be spared: but divine wisdom saw meet to sever it from the parent's heart. This event occurred about the year 1796. Mr. Cooke's sufferings were still more poignant than under the loss of his two first-born. He continued to grieve bitterly for some time after the loss of the child, and was relieved from his anguish in a somewhat singular way. It happened that at this crisis he was called by Divine Providence to supply the pulpit at the Tabernacle, Bristol. A friend who observed the melancholy state of his feelings, called upon him, and proposed to take him to hear a noted speaker among the Quakers, who was expected at their meeting-house that day. Willing to satisfy the kind solicitude of his friend, and ready to go any where to engage his thoughts profitably, or assuage the bitterness of his grief, he consented, and they accordingly went. There were several well-known speakers of that society present; but after a long space, no one appeared disposed to rise and address the assembly. He took out a small pocket Bible, to engage his mind in the midst of the silence. After reading for some time, a shrill female voice saluted his ear; which, having awakened attention by several groans and sighs, at length uttered these words, and no more: "Verily, I perceive that *children* are *idols!*" The speaker sat down: no other arose. Mr. Cooke and his friend withdrew: his heart was full, and he hastened to express his resignation and submission, under the pointed reproof which, in so singular and unexpected a manner, the Spirit of God had addressed so simply, yet so effectually, to his conscience. There was no possibility of this female friend knowing the state of his mind. He has frequently remarked since, when relating this anecdote to his friends, "whether inspired or not, she was a messenger of God to my soul: the cloud was dispersed, the chain was broken, and peace and joy returned."

Since it is impossible to preserve a very accurate arrangement of the facts and circumstances which I have been able

to collect, I shall here suspend the narrative of his domestic history, to detail an interesting occurrence relative to the property which had belonged to his mother, and which I mentioned, in the early part of this Memoir, as having been illegally alienated from him by his father. I introduce the fact here, because it occurred at or near to the period at which we have now arrived.

A gentleman of very respectable appearance called at his house rather early one morning, and requested to see the Rev. Mr. Cooke. As soon as Mr. C. entered the room, he said—"Sir, I am an entire stranger to you; and it is business of no very pleasant or ordinary kind that has brought me to Maidenhead. Some years ago, an estate was purchased, situated (*the name of the place is forgotten, and also whether the applicant or his father was the purchaser*), for which an adequate value was given at the time. But," continued the gentleman, "I find, on looking over the deeds, that, although it has been in the possession of my family for many years, the sale is not valid, nor my title good, until it is signed by one John Cooke, who was, at the time of sale, a *minor*. After much search, by the aid of my legal advisers, I have ascertained that you are that John Cooke: and now it depends on you, whether what my (*father*) honourably purchased, but your father dishonestly sold, shall continue in the possession of my family or not. The gentleman then most frankly opened and exposed to Mr. Cooke a bundle of parchments containing all the particulars of the sale, with the deeds that had been executed. It is believed that the estate had greatly increased in value, and at the time of this application was worth between *three and four hundred pounds per annum*.

Mr. Cooke, after looking over the writings, and ascertaining that all was open and honourable on the side of the purchaser, replied to the following effect. "Sir, I feel for the situation in which you are placed. The estate is the just right of myself and family; and in point of law I could dispossess you and yours: but as I am satisfied, whatever injustice has been practised on the part of the seller, you have acted honourably in the purchase, and have actually paid to another the price of what is mine—to set your mind at rest, I will affix my signature, although by doing so, I shall alienate from my family what they ought to possess. I do so, Sir, under the influence of those principles, which the gospel teaches me, and humbly depending on the care

and wisdom and bounty of that heavenly Father, who took me up from my youth, who has always supplied my necessities, and on whose promise I rely, that he will give me all things needful for life and godliness." He then affixed his signature and seal to the title deeds. The gentleman went away amazed at his nobleness of mind, and admiring those principles which had induced him so generously to concede all he could have desired, without even hinting at the necessity of a compromise or asking any compensation.

As we are now engaged in what may be properly designated his *domestic history*, it may be advisable to complete this section of our Memoir, before we enter upon a detail of events more immediately connected with his public character.

After the death of his only son, in 1796, it pleased God to spare to him two daughters, Sarah and Mary, who both lived to mature age. But from the period of his son's death, an interval of almost uninterrupted peace and enjoyment was granted to him in his family. His qualities were eminently social, and his mind fitted both to receive and impart in a high degree the quiet but refreshing joys of home. His family received much of his attention, and though public engagements pressed upon his time, and his services were often sought in distant places, yet he neglected not the interest of his own household.

His two daughters were grown up nearly to the estate of womanhood, when Mrs. Cooke was suddenly snatched away from her partner and family. After his usual morning studies, he went forth to take a short ride. Mrs. C. helped him on with his great coat. He was not absent more than half an hour. As he approached the house he saw his daughter anxiously looking out for him: her countenance soon told him that something alarming had occurred, he flew to the room—his beloved partner was stretched on a sofa—the surgeon applying leeches and assiduously employing every means to give relief. But Mr. C. soon perceived that the mortal blow was struck. She died on the 13th of November, 1813, aged 46. He bowed with devout submission and glorified God. Mrs. C. never spoke or noticed any one after her first seizure. A short period sufficed to release her happy spirit. At the request of her mourning partner, her removal was improved by the Rev. A. Redford, of Windsor.

A few days after this afflictive visitation, he wrote thus in his private *memoranda*: "The only wise God" displays his

wisdom in every action of his providence, whether seen by us or not. He has 'taken away the desire of my eyes with a stroke.' The shock was felt in a manner inexpressibly strong; it seemed to dissolve my strength, cast a cloud over the whole world, and leave me 'sitting solitary;' although the sympathy of my friends is expressed from morning till night, by visits, inquiries, or presents, and my two affectionate girls are allowed to stay with me. But under my bereavement, I call on the Lord for 'strength! strength! strength! equal to my day.' *My* day of trial and of *duty;* as a *widower*, as a *father*, witnessing the anguish of my very dear daughters, and as a *Christian minister*, under obligations to *do* and *bear*, as I have exhorted others to perform their duties, and endure their trials; lest any should say, as Job's unfeeling *visitors*, called *friends*, said to him, 'Thy hands have upholden him that was fallen, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is come upon *thee*, and thou faintest; it toucheth *thee*, and *thou* art *troubled*.' Indeed, Christian friends and ministers often expect us to feel as *they* feel, who never had our *trials*, nor exercised grace in *our depths*. It is no difficult task for a person who never had a child, to give cold advice to a bereaved parent, and to expect resignation, without pain or grief. The husband who never lost a wife, or felt relieved rather than pained by the death of one, is an entire stranger to the bitterness of heart which a husband of tender and strong affections suffers. In vain, almost, has the wise man said to many persons, 'the heart knows its *own* bitterness,' for they imagine themselves capable judges of the bitterness of hearts, not their own, without passing through *similar trials*. Equally wrong is the decision of such persons on the *supernatural power* the deeply-tried Christian enjoys under the heaviest pressures. These 'strangers do not meddle with his JOYS. Indeed, it is too plain that such Christians and ministers do not even perceive the *substantial support* of the believer, because they never felt the reality or necessity of it in an equal degree.'"

In November, 1819, died his daughter, Mary, who had married Mr. Z. Westbrook, the second son of one of the deacons of the church, and one of Mr. Cooke's earliest friends at Maidenhead. A short account of the experience and happy death of this beloved daughter, Mr. C. published in a pamphlet, intituled "Celestial Glory dawning upon the Young Christian at the Gates of Death." The very decisive and satisfactory evidences of piety which Mrs. Westbrook gave on her

death-bed, greatly relieved the severity of the stroke to her afflicted father. She left one child, a boy of great promise, to whom Mr. C. was most tenderly attached. Indeed, it proved a source of great consolation to him, that the remaining parent was willing to commit the boy entirely to the care and instruction of his grandfather. An attention to his education occupied Mr. Cooke's mind in his leisure hours, while by the child's cheerful and engaging company, he served in some degree to fill up the places of those whom death had summoned away.

In May, 1822, after a painful and lingering illness, he lost his only surviving daughter, Sarah. But in her also he had hope. Her protracted illness was blessed to her spiritual advantage; and the now solitary father was cheered in the midst of his repeated losses and afflictions, by the hope of meeting again all the dear members of his family, in that kingdom where neither pain, death, nor separation will be able for ever to intrude. After the last inroad of death, he said to one of his friends, "I seem to have gathered all my dear family before me into my Father's house, and it now only remains for me to follow them."

Thus this good man was taught, year by year, to bear the chastisement of the Lord, and thus meekly did he sustain the strokes of his Father's rod. How singularly the painful exercises of domestic and public trial contributed to improve his Christian and ministerial character, those well know who enjoyed the privilege of his public instructions and private friendship. From every one of his troubles he seemed to come forth only the more vigorous for divine service, the more refreshed for spiritual duties, and the more stedfastly set upon the pursuit of that glory which no adversity can sully, and no time consume.

FACTS AND ANECDOTES CONNECTED WITH MR. COOKE'S PUBLIC LIFE.

From the references already made to Mr. Cooke's Diary and Memoranda, it will probably be inferred, that he left a regular narrative of his life. But before I enter upon this section of the Memoir, it is necessary to state that, after the period of his settlement at Maidenhead, his diary ceased to be a history, and became more strictly a religious work. I

consists almost entirely of pious meditations and exercises of religious feeling. These writings were continued only at intervals, and in his later years are very scanty. But from detached papers, letters and memoranda, in most instances destitute of dates, I have been enabled to make a selection of anecdotes and facts, which will both illustrate Mr. Cooke's character, exhibit a portion of the distinguished success which attended his labours, and instruct, while they gratify, the reader. I am under the necessity of giving most of these narratives without dates.

'REASON PAYING HOMAGE TO REVELATION.'

Many years ago, Mr. Cooke published a very interesting pamphlet containing the dying confessions of a Deist, with the above title. Soon after its publication, a great commotion was excited in Maidenhead and its neighbourhood. The ungodly seemed goaded by it to great madness. The brother of the deceased gentleman conceived himself injured, and sent a messenger to Mr. Cooke, demanding the satisfaction of a gentleman. Mr. Cooke replied, "I am quite prepared to give Mr. —— the satisfaction of a *Christian* gentleman; and, according to the laws of honour, as he has sent the challenge, it rests with me to choose time, place, and weapons. I do not choose to fight with pistols; my weapon is a *sword*; and if he will meet me in this parlour to-morrow, at noon, with any witnesses he may desire, I shall be prepared to meet him with the *sword* of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. My character, my principles, my office, forbid my using any other weapons." It need not be added, that his opponent did not admire this method of meeting the challenge, and in consequence Mr. C. heard no more of him. But the pamphlet was made extensively useful. Mr. Cooke says, "Several Deists were led to discern the absurdity of their speculations, and to renounce them: some who halted between two opinions, were brought to a happy decision; and several merely nominal professors, induced to 'receive the truth in the love of it.' An inn-keeper who feared God, hearing some person condemn my pamphlet, opened it, and requested him to read the page on which he placed his finger. He read it, and exclaimed, 'I do not like it.'—'For the same reason,' replied the inn-keeper, 'others dislike it—because they see their own picture.'"

The following anecdote, among others, was certified to

Mr. C., by the best authority, and he inserted it in a third edition of the book.

"The late Rev. Mr. Foster (Clerkenwell), an eminently useful and popular minister of the Establishment, took occasion to read several extracts from this work to his congregation, and recommended the whole to their perusal. An individual who was present, mentioned Mr. Foster's earnest recommendation to a friend, who was a Deist. The author subsequently received from the Deist the following statement. 'The recommendation of my friend, led me to various reflections; and I exclaimed, *Reason* paying homage—homage to Revelation! in the confession of a Deist too, and at the gates of death! After a pause I added, with self-confidence and self-complacency, my *understanding* is too strongly fortified to be shaken by a *pamphlet:* I will read it.' He accordingly gave an evening to the examination of its contents, and remarked, after a very attentive and serious perusal, 'I resolved to give it a *second* reading; hoping to find some fallacy in its arguments, to relieve my mind from the uneasiness it had produced.'"

"On the *second* reading, I felt the force of its appeals; it had reached my conscience, and pierced my heart, as I had no shield for either. And, indeed, the truth had become '*a witness in myself*,' to the guilt, depravity, and misery within me; and to the suitableness of the atonement and grace of the SAVIOUR it revealed."

He received "the TRUTH in the love of it," openly avowed the change of his sentiments, heard Mr. FOSTER constantly, and DIED in the Faith he had embraced.

"A physician, who was a professed Deist, and had frequently attended me, was confined to his bed by disease. When reminded of his danger by an apothecary, his mind was tortured by despair, bordering on derangement. 'What,' said he, 'if I should repent and recover? I shall be laughed at by my friends. If I were sure I should not recover, I would repent.' He vainly supposed that he could repent at any moment of his disease, instead of depending on the grace of God to 'give him repentance'—imagined, that momentary grief, instead of a change of his views and affections, constituted repentance—and dreaded the ridicule of his infidel companions, more than the displeasure of God.—He died raving mad!"

"Another eminent physician, who gloried in his disbelief of the sacred Scriptures, invited me to dinner, with another dissenting minister. After dinner, he asked me what he must do, after reading all the proofs of the divine authority of the Bible he could procure, and not being convinced by them? 'I have read,' said he, 'Archdeacon Paley, without conviction.'

I answered—You have rejected arguments, stifled conviction, renounced the Bible as a revelation of God,—and what substitute have you for the Bible?

"Reason, Reason!" he exclaimed, "which is sufficient to direct me in duty, and support me in distress."

Mr. Cooke. Have you ever apprehended yourself under mortal disease?

Physician. Yes, and felt firm as a rock, from the supports of reason.

Mr. C. May I ask your Lady? (who was present).

Yes, and welcome (she replied). Never, never, Doctor, did I see such hopeless despair as I have, in such circumstances, seen in you.

The case is decided, I rejoined. Your "reason failed with all its powers," where "faith prevails and love adores."

Phy. Do not you believe that I possess a portion of understanding?

Mr. C. To an extraordinary degree.

Phy. Do you believe I consider it my interest to be right?

Mr. C. No, sir. Your happiness is your interest, and you persuade yourself that the indulgence of criminal passion is your happiness.

Phy. You think, then, I am living in some sin?

Mr. C. I certainly do; as my Bible mentions "the lusts of them that live in error." Error is the refuge of sin.

Phy. What sin?

Mr. C. It is not in my power to name it.

Phy. Try, sir, as you seem to be confident.

Mr. C. This is an unfair demand; but I conceive an infidel open to any temptation which presents itself, being without "the truth," which is the only "shield and buckler."

Phy. Pray name one.

Mr. C. Adultery, or any other sin.

Phy. Thank you, sir.

The minister present added—You have brought this on yourself, Doctor.

Phy. What do you think my motives for such conduct?

Mr. C. The doctrines of grace are too humbling for the

pride of reason—a salvation with all its blessings without human merit: and the commands of God are too pure for your inclination.

We parted, and he promised to see me again.

The following market-day he called on me as usual, and began thus:—

You often refer to the human soul; I have dissected many human bodies, and never found a soul in any one of them.

Mr. C. Nor did you find a principle of *animal life* in them after death: and you could no more find a human soul in the body after its dismission from the body, than you could find me in my house at Maidenhead, when I had left it and arrived in London.

Phy. But I never saw a human soul.

Mr. C. Did you ever see the wind? Will you therefore say there *is no* wind? You have seen the *operations*, the effects, of the wind, and of the human soul.

Phy. But the brutes appear to have *souls* and passions as truly as man: are they accountable and immortal? I suppose you will say this is *more nice than wise.*

Mr. C. No, I object not to an observation because it is *nice*, if it be *just.* Brutes are not accountable and immortal as man. They are subject to man, and formed to serve him. God hath granted to man dominion over them, saying, "have thou dominion over the beasts of the field." And this accounts for what is daily seen—a boy directing a flock of sheep, or a drove of oxen.

Phy. But they sometimes kill him: a cow by a thrust, or a horse by kicking or throwing him.

Mr. C. True; man often abuses them by pride and passion; and when he makes them serve his lusts, they often throw off the yoke of their masters, to punish them for throwing off the yoke of God.

Phy. You say the brutes are governed by *instinct:* I say, they are governed by reason; and there is no higher principle in *man.*

Mr. C. Man is in possession of a *moral* capacity—a conscience—a power of reflecting on the past and the future. His moral capacity qualifies him for four things, which distinguish him from the most sagacious animals: man is capable of the *knowledge of God*—the *likeness of God*—the *enjoyment of God*—the *service of God*—and this renders him an *accountable* creature. "The soul of the brute goeth downward, but the soul of man goeth upward."

Phy. I have never entertained such a difference.

Mr. C. Perhaps not; for a plain reason: you have never seriously, candidly, and impartially, *considered* the subject. Solomon asks "*Who knoweth,*" that is, *considereth seriously:* "The soul of a beast that goeth downward to the earth, and the soul of a man that goeth upward?" It is as if he had said, "but few consider the *difference* between them, in their respective capacities, their *worth* and their *duration.*"

Phy. What, then, constitutes the difference in the capacities of the soul of a brute and the soul of a man?

Mr. C. Chiefly, the moral capacity. Many brutes have great natural sagacity, highly improved by man; but no mere animal is capable of these four things:—the knowledge of God, a resemblance of God, the enjoyment of God, and devotion to God.

Phy. Well, I see you are determined I shall be condemned.

Mr. C. No, sir; this is your own determination; you condemn the Bible, because the Bible condemns you.

Phy. I have often silenced your believing Christians.

Mr. C. Possibly you may have conquered the weak arguments of weak Christians, without conquering their faith; but your restlessness proves, that your have never conquered your own *fears.*

Phy. Restlessness?

Mr. C. Yes, a wicked man, from his guilty conscience and his criminal passions, is "a troubled sea which cannot rest."

Phy. My time is expired; I will see you again.

Three weeks after this conversation this physician was detected in adultery, which his wife declared to be the sixth instance within her knowledge; and he left the country.

It is an honour to the Bible to have such a man for its enemy!

Another Conversation with a Deist.

[*The following notes bear no date, and contain no reference or clue by which we can determine, whether the* Deist, *who appears here, was the person with whom the former conversation was held. Mr. Cooke is well known to have had many such discussions, both with strangers in travelling, and with infidels among his neighbours. He rather sought than shunned intercourse with such persons, and was eminently successful in convincing several of "the error of*

their ways." From these facts, as well as from the absence, in this conversation, of all allusion to the medical profession, I am disposed to think that the Deist *here, is a different person from the physician who appears in the former article.*

The reader may possibly detect a want of connexion and sequence in some parts of the dialogue, and will observe that it is incomplete. The explanation and apology which I have to offer, will, it is hoped, be readily admitted. The Manuscript is written on separate *papers, and is not* paged. *In consequence, it had fallen into some disorder, probably in the author's own hands, but, at all events, before it came into mine. The attempts I have made to restore the papers to their original and natural order, have not been altogether satisfactory to myself. I trust, however, no material defects will be discoverable. The abrupt termination is a subject of greater regret. It is probable the author had completed it; but I have been unable to discover the termination among his papers, and was, therefore, obliged either to suppress it, or give it as a* Fragment. *Its defects of form did not appear so formidable as to prohibit its insertion, while its general excellence and adaptation to usefulness, imperatively forbad its suppression.*]

Deist. I pity the weakness of those who receive the Bible as a revelation from God.

Mr. Cooke. Weakness, sir! Are men of the finest talents, the most extensive learning and unblemished character, so weak as to be incapable of understanding the arguments of common sense? Will you thus censure those prodigies of human intellect, who were universally esteemed conscientious, and had no worldly interest to serve? Did a Bacon, a Boyle, a Newton, a Locke, seriously, frequently for years, examine and *receive* the Bible as a revelation from God, whilst you reject it without impartial examination? I pity your weakness, despise your vanity, and tremble for your rashness.

D. Tremble for me?

C. Yes; as a *reasonable* and *immortal* being. I esteem you as a fellow creature;—as a fallen man I pity you, and exhort you to believe in an 'Almighty Saviour;—but as a fallen man, unwilling to be saved from your sins, I *tremble* for you.

D. Do you consider how many you condemn in these assertions?

C. "There is no respect of persons with God," and his word. The Bible condemns *all kinds* of sin, and reveals no REMEDY for any who reject Christ, and "make light" of his "great salvation."

D. Perhaps error is not quite so dangerous as you deem it to be.

C. If you think error innocent, why do you attempt to convince Christians of their error? And if Christians think revealed truth of infinite importance, why do you wonder at their endeavours to convince you? We both acknowledge the importance of *truth*; and yet you contend that error is a harmless thing!

Be serious and impartial. Did the errors of the Deists, ever produce that humble and elevated devotion,—that benevolent and ardent zeal,—those self-denying and persevering exertions,—that calm resignation in suffering,—that substantial peace of conscience, and those enlivening prospects, which faith in the promises of God has afforded?

D. You are soaring!

C. And you are grovelling!

D. But you must allow me to possess a general knowledge of men and things.

C. I do allow it: but an unsanctified knowledge, a knowledge which does not "renew your mind," puffeth up,—swells you with self-conceit,—gratifies your pride of understanding, and renders you indifferent to the humbling and purifying knowledge of the Gospel; what the Apostle terms, "the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

D. I read, think, and write much: perhaps more than you do; and I desire to know. If after all my studies I am mistaken, pity me.

C. I do pity you; and endeavour to convince you, as one, "ever learning, but not coming to the knowledge of the truth."

D. How do you account for my ill success?

C. From the pride of reason and the love of sin. You despise holiness, and the truth, which produces it; as it is written, "a scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not."

D. If I always possessed the feelings, which you describe, you might suspect my sincerity: but being open to conviction, I am not so incorrigibly wrong as you suppose.

C. I cannot suppose you to be always of one mind. If you read and think, you must often differ from yourself; for "a double-minded man, is unstable in all his ways: like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed."

D. Why may not I go to heaven in my own way?

C. There is but ONE way; faith in Christ, who says, "I am the way: no man cometh unto the father but by ME."

D. If a traveller thinks he is right, he travels on.

C. True: but his *thinking* himself in the right road does not prove him right; and with respect to religion, Solomon says, "there is a way which *seemeth* right to a man; but the end thereof, is the way of death."

If *reason* had been sufficient to direct man, even in *innocence*, why did God impart a *revelation* of his will to him? And if revelation was the light of reason to man in a state of perfection, how can *fallen* man know the mind of God without it? With all the advantages of revelation, a man may be a *Deist;* that is, he may deem his reason sufficient, without revelation. Witness an unbelieving *Cain*, in Adam's family; a prophane *Ham*, in the family of righteous Noah; a persecuting *Ishmael*, in the house of Abraham, the friend of God; a prophane Esau, among the children of *Isaac*; an ambitious *Absalom*, in David's household; and the *traitor* Judas, among even the Apostles of Christ! Indeed there are, even now, many thousands of practical Deists, who possess the Bible, and profess to believe it.

D. How do you account for this inconsistency?

C. It is accounted for by the depravity of the heart of fallen man, which has displayed its strength under every degree of divine revelation, from Adam to Noah—from Noah to Abraham—from Abraham to Moses—from Moses to David—from David, through the prophetic dispensation—from the prophets to Christ—and from Christ to the present day.

D. Then it appears, that reason, even aided by revelation, may leave man in the dark, as to his happiness and duty. This is unaccountable.

C. No, it is easily explained. If man, through the pride of understanding, neglects, opposes, or abuses, the word of God, he rejects his guide. Yielding himself to *worldly affections*, the *love of sin*, and agreeable *examples* of persons living in *error* and *criminal indulgences*, he abhors revelation as a light which disturbs his false peace. "He loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil." The word of God is too *pure* for his taste. Under the dominion of sin, should his *conscience* become unquiet, he may flee to *self-righteousness;*—substitute a partial morality, and a few ceremonies for godliness;—trust in his imaginary repentance, his reformation from gross sins, his sufferings, and his hypocritical charity,—instead of the all-sufficient atonement of Christ;—and resolutions made in his *own strength*, for the *grace* and *spirit* of Christ.

D. What advantage then do such persons derive from revelation?

C. Revelation aggravates their sin, and exposes them to a greater punishment: but this arises from their *rejection* of it, their aversion to the *purity* of its constitution, and the gracious proposal of a *spiritual salvation*; a salvation, not only from the *punishment* of sin, but from *sin itself*. But this does not render the mercy and "faithfulness of God of no effect," towards those who *receive* divine revelation, by an unfeigned faith. Thus Abel became "righteous Abel," in Adam's family. By faith, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, walked with God. And to Christ "gave all the prophets," and Apostles "witness, that through his name," or mediation, "WHOSOEVER believeth, should receive remission of sins."

D. Do not you find the Bible to be an obscure book?

C. The Bible assures me, that "God is light," in himself, and in his works and word. The darkness is in me: in hearing and reading the word of God, "he opens our eyes, and turns us from darkness to light." Such persons will not complain of the darkness of the Scriptures; but gratefully exclaim, "thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths."

D. You once felt some doubts if the Bible were true; are you now free from doubt?

C. I am thankful that on that question I am free from doubts, and fears, and suspicions. I feel "the witness in myself," to the truths of revelation, respecting the evil of sin —the depravity of the human heart—the suitableness of Christ as a Saviour, and his ability and willingness to save all that come to him. I have felt the guilt and misery of an unbeliever: I now enjoy the peace of a believer, in the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. My past experience teaches me your *present* feelings; for, "as face answereth to face in the water, so the heart of man to man."

D. Is it not presumption to pretend to a knowledge of my heart?

C. You asked me a question respecting my doubts: permit me to answer your question by asking you another.

Are you *sure* the Bible is not a revelation from God? Do not you sometimes doubt whether Deism is not a system of error? Have you no suspicions that you are wrong? Are you not sometimes *afraid* the Bible is the word of God? Are you not often afraid, that there is a Heaven from which your unprepared soul may be excluded; and a Hell, prepared for such as you, as Bedlam is prepared for madmen!

D. What harm have I done?

C. Poisoned your fellow man: error is poison.

D. But if I think what I have taught to be *truth*?

C. That does not make it so. You have poisoned *yourself* by error.

D. Have you no *suspicions*, no *fears*, that the Bible is not true?

C. No: When I was a youth, I doubted if the Bible were a revelation from God; but as it was esteemed so by men of the largest understanding, the most extensive reading, the greatest learning, the profoundest knowledge, and the most eminent characters, who had examined the claims of the Bible to divine inspiration, and were confirmed in their faith in proportion to their diligence in studying the subject—I began to suspect MYSELF.

D. What effects did your suspicions of yourself produce?

C. I was induced to examine the Bible, by reading it night and day; to compare one part with another, to observe how far its declaration agreed with the characters and conditions of good and bad men; and to learn what truths the Bible contained, which might induce good men to love it, and bad men to condemn it.

D. What were your conclusions?

C. I found that the Old and New Testament agreed in stating the fall of man from God—the salvation of Christ, and the justice and grace of God, in saving penitent and believing sinners, through an all-sufficient atonement for sin.

D. Did you read the writings of the Deists, who deny that the Bible is a revelation from God?

C. I have; and it appeared to me, that, although they derived much from the Bible, respecting the character of God and the obligations of man, they gave the honour of this discovery to their corrupt *reason*; and asserted that reason, which is only a *capacity*—an *eye*, without the *light*—is the revelation itself.

D. Why say *corrupt* reason; when it is the only hand-post to direct the traveller in the right road?

C. Riding home with a friend, in a very dark night, we came to a place where four roads met. In vain we employed our eyes to read the direction-post. It was dark. Ah! said my friend, here our eyes resemble reason without the Bible. We want the hand-post and light to direct us. All now is uncertain conjecture.

D. Then you allow that a hand-post and good eyes are sufficient to direct us.

C. No: the Deist possesses reason and revelation, and yet misses the right road by inattention to revelation; like a tr[redacted]

veller, with the directing-post before him, following his senses without *reading* the directions, with attention and simplicity.

D. But suppose I read the direction and prefer a different road?

C. Then you act like a Deist, who prefers the broad, smooth road, not believing that it leadeth to destruction. His reason is perverted by worldly interest, by prejudice, by passion, by the love of sin. The Bible directs him into "the narrow way, which leadeth unto life;" but he loves his own way, the course of this world, in which he can gratify his pride and his sinful inclinations.

D. Your self-sufficiency to understand the Bible may appear to others a species of pride—the pride of superior understanding, which you charge on us.

C. Perhaps it may appear otherwise, when I assure you that I feel my own insufficiency to understand the Bible, without the grace which it reveals, and directs me to seek. The Bible claims to be a revelation of the mind of God—it warns me of my spiritual blindness and sinful self-love—it teaches me to pray, "Lord, open thou mine EYES, that I MAY understand the wondrous things of thy word." It assures me that Jesus Christ not only "expounded the Scriptures to his disciples," but that he "opened their UNDERSTANDINGS." The Bible requires a humble and teachable spirit, and promises "the meek God will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way." Unless we seek to have "the eyes of our understanding enlightened," we shall resemble a traveller with the directing-post before him, in broad day-light, yet unable to read the directions, his eyes being darkened by disease.

D. Allow that Deists possess some understanding, if not an equal share, with believers of the Bible.

C. We make no pretensions to superior intellect; but I love to appeal to CONSCIENCE, from which many Deists have sought refuge in infidelity; and the confessions of many Deists, when "converted from the error of their ways," or overwhelmed by guilt, in approaching death, justify our attempts to speak to your *conscience*, and make *conscience* speak to you.

D. I make no objection to such an address.

C. This is candid. I should be sorry to abuse the liberty you grant, or to be offended by your using the same freedom.

As a *Deist*, you can have no certain prospect of future happiness. I appeal to your CONSCIENCE.

As a *Deist*, you cannot receive any support or consolation

from any one PROMISE of God, under the guilt of sin—the pressure of poverty and sickness—the treachery of friends, or the cruelty of enemies.

As a *Deist*, your reason cannot shield you from the fears of death and of future woe.

As a *Deist*, you possess no equivalent for the Bible, to relieve you under the tyranny of your passions, the shortness and uncertainty of life, the diseases of your body, the vast desires of your soul, the weakness of reason, and the frequent fears of the truth of revelation and a future judgment. The Bible reveals mercy to every believing and penitent sinner, through a Mediator. A *Deist rejects* this revealed mercy, the Mediator of it, and the book that reveals it, without any *equivalent*. Let *conscience* speak!

D. Your appeals are uttered with great confidence; whether with equal modesty I am not so certain.

C. My confidence in these appeals is produced by a full persuasion of the truth of the Bible, after frequent and solemn examination of its divinity, for forty years. This confidence is strengthened by reading the writings of the principal writers in defence of Deism, and by observing how they lived and died. My confidence receives additional strength from my *success* in endeavouring to convince and impress the consciences of Deists; and from their confessions, when "tried so as by fire."

D. You have not heard any confession from me.

C. True; but this does not discourage my attempts, so long as you will hear.

Some have secretly *moaned assent* to the truth of my appeals, as they have afterwards acknowledged, even under the most studied *concealment* of their convictions. And I am not without hope, that, under your languid smile, your *conscience* is on my side, though your *tongue* is not so.

D. I suppose, after all, *your* principles also will be *tried* as by fire; death is, to quote from your Bible, "the way of all the earth."

C. True; but with the certainty of future happiness, and the way to attain it, plainly revealed to the meanest capacity, real religion brings a full compensation for all the Christian's losses by death. He is taught by "the word of grace," that "to die is GAIN!"

D. I have no inclination to learn that children suffer for their parents, or that one human being is to suffer for the sin of another person.

C. And yet you witness the fact every day, that children

suffer from the intemperance and folly of their parents; that those who forfeit their lives for their crimes, by the laws of the land, entail great sufferings on their families.

D. In *this* world, I grant it.

C. If they so suffer in this world from the righteous appointment of God, and are hardened by their pains, why not in the next world?

D. Their sufferings may atone for their sins, and purify them.

C. This is absurd conjecture, resembling the notions of Pagans, that philosophy, or music, may purify the soul; or that human sacrifices can atone for sin and purify the soul. The Normans and Danes offered ninety men, as many cocks, dogs, and horses every year, in the month of January.

D. This is sufficiently absurd.

C. Truly; but it exposes the inconsistency of those who expect to atone for their sins by suffering less, or without any atonement.

D. And what if the Almighty should pardon without any atonement?

C. Still conjecture. And what if he should not? Prove that he ever did. Shew us the many or few who have been so forgiven, and on what terms. Examine creation, Providence, conscience, and the majesty, purity, and justness of God, and produce one instance of a pardoned sinner.

D. He will pardon the penitent.

C. How can you prove this without the Bible? And what will be the condition of the impenitent? Without revelation all is darkness, uncertainty, and despair. Those communications which God made to Adam, Noah, and the patriarchs, were, by traditional conveyance from one generation to another, the only source of divine knowledge to the heathen world; and the precepts thereof, styled by them right reason—natural law—common law—universal law. These notices of God and duty, in process of time, became so altered and obscured, that mankind lost the true apprehensions of divine truth. Hence, their imperfect accounts of God and his providence, the soul's immortality, and a future state. If later philosophers, and modern Deists, write and speak more consistently on divine truths, it is not because they possessed more intellect and learning—exercised more diligence and impartial inquiry;—but because they have borrowed of revelation, what they proudly ascribe to the discoveries of nature or reason.

These traditional notices were their measure of good and evil, "a law unto themselves." Thus, Plato defines the un-

written law, "that which proceeded from custom; that is, actions proceeding from custom, according to the common notions of mankind." And their crime was, the not obeying truth, according to the aids of knowledge afforded them, not the degrees of conviction they were under. By this law their consciences accused or excused them.

D. Surely I can repent of sin, as a reasonable creature, without the grace and atonement of your Saviour.

C. Never! Without the atonement of Christ, there is no warrant to hope for pardon of sin; and without hope, no one ever repented. And such is the *strength* of sin in the human heart, that nothing short of the *grace* of the revealed Saviour can deliver you from the *guilt* and *power* of sin.

D. Why not, if I exert my reason, without trusting to the grace of the Saviour?

C. Let *facts* answer you. The *law* of God convicts and condemns you, but affords you no *assistance.* Sin injures your *health,* your *character,* your *peace,* and your *property;* and yet you *love sin. Human laws* condemn you,—*education* checks you,—*discipline* restrains, good *example* invites; *afflictions* alarm you,—and yet in childhood, youth, and manhood, you have *indulged* your sin. Individuals, families, nations, prove that sin is not conquerable by the strength of *reason.*

D. If sin is so powerful a principle, am I not rather to be pitied, than blamed and punished for it?

C. No: you *boast* of power to conquer it, and yet indulge it; you are self-condemned. Your *experience* proves that the love of sin is deeply rooted in your fallen nature,—firmly entrenched in the soul by custom, prejudice, and bad examples,—nourished and inflamed by temptation,—and yet you at one time deny the *fact,* and at another admit it, and make your depravity an *excuse* for your sins.

The Bible reveals a Saviour, who bears that name, because he saves those who trust his all-sufficient grace, from their sins. This remedy you reject, because you love your sins, and are unwilling to be saved from them.

D. Great men in the heathen and the Christian world have thought differently from you.

C. True: one has written on the excellency, the charms, and power of virtue;—another proposes natural and moral philosophy as armour against sin;—a third has proposed music and the mathematics, as a sovereign remedy: but whose pride was humbled,—whose lusts were subdued,—whose soul was ever purified, by these means?

D. Then there is, by your account, no remedy for me.

C. There is no salvation for you *in* your sins:—no salvation for you by your own merit or resolutions:—no certain salvation for you or any other, but by the gracious Redeemer, whom you neglect and oppose.

D. There are other books besides the Bible; the volumes of nature and Providence, which I have long studied.

C. The Bible informs me that this great world is God's workmanship,—that Providence is his powerful, wise, kind, and righteous government: but while they present many delightful displays of his goodness and patience, they proclaim no pardon for the guilty, no strength for the weak against sin, no *promises* of forgiveness of *any* sin, much less of *many* sins, of repeated and aggravated sins, of *all* sins; not one promise of acceptance for my person or prayers, no one promise of support in trouble and in death, nor the least assurance of eternal life. Without the Bible, I am without a Saviour, and without "a good hope."

D. Have not I a portion of common sense, of understanding, of reason? With this portion of intellect, I object to the *doctrines* of revelation.

C. You remind me of a man on the stage, who asked me if he did not possess the power of *imitation* in a transcendant degree above me; and added, Is imitation a gift? How am I to use it?

To this I answered,—in imitation of *wise* and *good* men, of *Jesus Christ*, of the *blessed God*,—"Be ye imitators of ME as dear children." You say I cannot equal you: I do not desire to imitate fools, madmen, or immoral men.

D. This proves a difference of *taste*.

C. True: and this affords us the true cause of your objections to the Holy Scriptures. They prohibit the indulgence of your sinful appetites and passions. They command you to be *chaste;* you love to indulge the lusts of the flesh. They command gentleness; you indulge violent resentment. They require spirituality; you prefer worldly pleasures. They enjoin humility; you cherish pride. They demand purity of *heart;* you substitute an external morality, and that very partial. They inspire real joy; your joy is transient and superficial, and noisy; "like a child in the dark, who whistles and sings to keep up his courage." The sacred Scriptures inspire "a good hope through grace:" your sheet-anchor and refuge from despair is, at best, dark uncertainty—conjecture.

D. I am happy in my ignorance.

C. That is impossible, since your ignorance of the Word of God is *criminal;* and how can that which increases your *guilt,* render you *happy?* Your ignorance is the effect of *aversion* to truth,—of the *love of sin,*—of a neglect of the means of obtaining divine knowledge. It is *wilful* ignorance; you "love darkness, and come not to the light, because your deeds are evil." "Light maketh manifest" your sins, your heart, your danger, and your duty; therefore you shun it, to maintain your pleasing delusions and your false peace. You are suspicious and fearful of the truth of the Bible, and think the real Christian's principles the *safest.*

D. I wish to be ignorant of sins and punishment.

C. I know you do. Proud of imaginary virtues, and forgetful of your greatest sins, all arguments against your conceits are weak as reeds, brittle as glass.

D. But if I can be happy without believing the Bible, why not allow me to enjoy myself?

C. I believe the Bible, which contradicts you; and I appeal to your CONSCIENCE as in the sight of God, for the truth of it in the following declaration.—"There is no PEACE saith my God, unto the wicked. The wicked are like the troubled sea." When Colonel Gardiner was congratulated by his wicked companions, as *the happy rake,* he told Dr. Doddridge, that on seeing a dog come into the room, he groaned inwardly, saying to himself, "*Oh! that I were that dog!*"

Such is the difference between the *appearance* of infidels, and the real misery they often feel. Colonel Gardiner afterwards felt the truth uttered by the incomparable Sir Isaac Newton, —"We account the *Scriptures* of GOD to be the most sublime philosophy."

D. Have you read Paine's works?

C. Yes; for the same reasons as medical men study *poisons,* and render them subservient to health. He is one of those characters which the Bible describes as *serpents;* and his subtlety is apparent, in flattering the pride, the passions, and prejudices of unbelievers. He exposes Christianity under the name of Popery; and exhausts his low wit, profane ridicule and hypocritical artifice, against the Bible, as if that contained the absurdities, the lies, the avaricious policy, the impurity, the tyranny and blasphemy of the papal system.

D. Do you think these remarks against Paine, are consistent with candour and charity?

C. Yes; if genuine charity and candour are consistent with *truth:* for Paine is well known to have been a prophane swearer and drunkard; and we have evidence upon oath, that religion was his favourite topic when he was intoxicated.

"The Gospel of peace does not require that we should make peace with its adversaries, or cease to repel their attacks; or even that we should act on the defensive;" but endeavour to "pull down their strong holds."

Deists may flatter the pride of reason, accommodate the prejudices and passions of others,—exercise their "low wit, prophane ridicule and gross abuse; and pretend great admiration of morality, to give an edge to their reproach." But the Deist takes offence at the Scriptures, as "the HOLY Scriptures;" and at the God they reveal, as "GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS." They are Deists in opinion, Pagans in inclination, and Atheists in practice."

D. What could induce Paine's violent opposition to the Bible?

C. The love of sin, the love of money, the love of praise from the tongues and pens of infidels. Paine in his younger days was a professing Christian: in his latter days an apostate. Breaking the bonds of a religious education, forsaking the ministry of the Gospel, stifling the convictions of conscience, he became a blasphemer of Christ and the Bible: he "walked in the counsel of the ungodly,—stood in the way of sinners,—and sat in the seat of the scornful." This wicked man hated the Bible, for the same reason that King Ahab hated the prophet Micaiah, because it "prophesied no good concerning him." The Holy Scriptures condemned Paine's infidel principles, his sinful practice, his pernicious conversation, "his evil heart of unbelief." The Bible was his *accuser*, —"a swift WITNESS against him,"—and a righteous judge pronounces the awful sentence against him.

D. Then what Paine produced against the Bible, you think evidence of its value?

C. Paine addresses the passions of the sensual. His writings betray his *ignorance* and *insolence*, his falsehood and malice; his false wit, empty declamation, scurrilous language, and bitter invective. It is an honour to the Bible to stand opposed by a drunken, lewd, and prophane man.

D. But Mr. Paine accuses the clergy of ignorance, as knowing little more than *a, b, ab,* and *hic, hæc, hoc.*

C. Whatever inconsistency he found in the clergy,—nothing but malignant falsehood could have denied a large

number of them to have been men of profound, various, and extensive learning, and eminent piety.

D. A lady, on taking her son to a boarding school, enjoined the master to take care that his taste was not injured by reading the Bible.

C. I pity the lady and her son; and would send them both to the feet of that illustrious scholar, Sir William Jones, who writes as follows:—"I have *regularly* and *attentively* read the *Holy Scriptures*, and am of opinion, this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more *sublimity* and *beauty*,—more *pure morality*,—more *important history*,—and finer strains of *poetry* and *eloquence*, than can be collected from *all other books*, in whatever language or age, they may have been composed."

D. I have often wondered, that the writings of unbelievers have not produced more effect on the believers of the Bible.

C. They have exerted all their faculties, employed every method to shake our faith in vain; and some of them, after using all their learning, experience and observation, to overthrow the gospel, have in the *serious* attempt, become *believers* and *advocates* of the Bible!

D. This I admit; but others have been confirmed in their unbelief, by the bad conduct of professed Christians.

C. I cannot deny this charge; but it is occasioned by practical Deists under the mask of the Christian name. There are hypocritical professors of Christianity and of Deism. Too many who are found in Christian congregations, intemperate, dishonest, deceitful, covetous, revengeful, and selfish. These are professed believers of that Bible which condemns them; like Judas, they cry, "Hail master! kiss the Redeemer, and betray him!

You are stumbled at the different opinions and sects, in religious professions, and ask,—what do I say to them?

That "the only wise God" has designs to answer by permitting them, worthy of his goodness, equity, and wisdom.

First. To try our *integrity*, in searching after truth, by reading, hearing, inquiry, and prayer. If sincere, we shall love a Christian in every sect. Hypocrites will join the society where they can best indulge their lust of pride, covetousness, worldly interest, or sensuality.

Secondly. They exercise the gracious principles of good men, and improve them,—love, humility, forbearance, patience.

Thirdly. They promote the propagation of the gospel.

The Calvinist occupies one portion of ground, and the Arminian another; and God, in blessing their labours, answers the purpose of his grace, and displays his manifold wisdom. Each society stimulates the other to useful exertions. Thus "Christ is preached" more extensively; and whilst different communities seek the salvation of man, by increasing their own societies, God fulfils the good pleasure of his will in calling sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.

Fourthly.—The erroneous societies, which degrade the Saviour by false doctrines, or corrupt practice, prove a trial to the upright Christian, excite his diligence and gratitude, and prove *judicial* to those who seek teachers after their own lusts. Under a spiritual dispensation, God may punish hypocrites by sentiments and practices which "try their spirits." Thus Providence, in unison with revelation, asks the question, and answers it, by the conversation and conduct of men —"What THINK ye of Christ?" And "the thoughts of many *hearts* are revealed." One is indifferent to sentiment, and another reads, hears, inquires, prays, fears, and examines, "What is truth?"

D. Your Bible is an infringement on my *liberty;* and you know liberty is a tender thing.

C. True: rich and poor,—the fashionable world and the vulgar, "claim the liberty of *ruining themselves.*" They take the liberty of calling lewdness, gallantry; and support this offspring of lawless passion, by public amusements, assemblies, theatres, and masquerades. If these polite hypocrites will vindicate *revenge* as proper spirit, and stamp humility with the name of meanness, and censure those as fanatics, who say lust is not love; that pride and ambition do not constitute greatness of mind—let not these gentlemen and ladies call themselves *Christians,* that is, *imitators of Christ.* "*Deceiving,*—and being *deceived,*" they hold fast the sweet delusion, that *sin* is harmless, and determine to live as they hope to die: —that is to live and die *without thinking.*

A Deist, or infidel, laughs at the principles his parents implanted in his mind; and calls them the *prejudices* of education; he often professes himself to be an Infidel, before he believes his own errors to be true. He *loves* infidelity, because it sets him at liberty from the restraints of the Bible. In company, he stifles his convictions; but sighs and is miserable when alone. In company, his *inclinations* rule him; when *alone,* his *conscience* disturbs him. "At night, —in his chamber,—in the dark,—in a storm of thunder,— like a child, he feels and trembles."

He boasts of his *sincerity* in rejecting the Bible: declares he does not believe it, and to avoid hypocrisy, he will not *profess* to believe it. But an infidel is not so free from hypocrisy as he may appear to be, to himself. He can avow an attachment to the Bible to obtain a wife with a fortune —to obtain customers,—to raise himself to office and power: and when his object is attained, throw off the mask, and appear the infidel. To gain a rich relation, and obtain a legacy;—to please a minister of state, and to secure a place; or to gain his election by pleasing the voters,—he can profess faith in the Bible. Are not these instances of *hypocrisy*? A young Deist paid his addresses to an amiable and pious young woman. She objected to his infidelity. He assured her his sentiments were changed,—attended the same place of worship for nine months,—changed his company and conduct, and gained his object. After marriage, he neglected his Bible, and the house of God, and devoted the sabbath to dissipation.

A second, solicitous to enjoy a place under government,—went to church, took the sacrament, obtained an office; and then disputed the truth of the Bible.

A third professed himself an infidel, after securing a minister's favour; professed himself a Christian to his successor; succeeded in his pursuit, and wrote an essay against the Bible.

A fourth, who was an apothecary, anxious to gain the credit and profit of attending a respectable family, professed to admire Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul; and to his brethren in infidelity, laughed at the credulity of the family he had deceived by his hypocrisy.

A fifth, assured a minister of the gospel that his preaching had opened his eyes to see the folly and danger of infidel principles; spoke highly of religion to his religious patients, and when ridiculed by his deistical companions, said, "I am the same man; but find it profitable to save appearances."

A sixth instance of the hypocrisy of Deists appeared in a banker, who was addicted to intemperance, gaming, and unchaste conversation. These were his words: "I profess to examine the Bible, and hope to feel conviction of its truth, if it really be a revelation from God: but as I sincerely desire to be right, I am sure you will rather pity than blame me if I am wrong. If I am impartial in examining the Bible, what can I do more?" All this was said to *Christians*. But at the *card table*, he said, "I am afraid to read the Bible,

The Calvinist occupies one portion of gro[illegible] a Bible [illegible]
minian another; and God, in blessing the[illegible]ng that wou[illegible]
the purpose of his grace, and displays [illegible]k about it: and
Each society stimulates the other to [illegible]me, I get off by p[illegible]
"Christ is preached" more extensi[illegible]n have their own wa[illegible]
communities seek the salvation [illegible]or the best. What ca[illegible]
own societies, God fulfils the
calling sinners to repentance.

Fourthly.—The errone[illegible]ing in public contrariety to the
viour by false doctrine[illegible] "I reject the Old Testament, and
the upright Christian[illegible] New Testament." To him I replied;
prove *judicial* to[illegible]ment is a superstructure on the Old
lusts. Under s[illegible] prophecies, and promises of the Old
crites by sent[illegible] in the New Testament. The New
Thus Provi[illegible] to the Old for confirmation of its contents.
tion, and [illegible] cannot be explained without the other. The
—"W[illegible] Testament appeals to the five books of Moses—the
man[illegible] Testament appeals.
an[illegible] and Prophets.
"[illegible]ism is a pleasing falsehood—a luscious lie, by which
Satan deceives the unbeliever, and tempts him to deceive
others. The restraints of revelation being removed, he in-
dulges his favourite passion:

"His chief, his ruling principle within,
The love of sweet security in sin."

If the real Christian, by entering "the straight gate into the narrow way," should, after all, find that "it leadeth unto life," the Deist is seeking heaven by way of hell: and in contradiction to Christ, his creed reads as follows,—"straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to destruction; and *nobody there is* who goes in thereat. Because wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth unto life: and *all they be* who find it."

"All men but saints, it seems, to heaven may rise,
All roads but faith in Christ, may reach the skies?"

Deism promotes the indulgence of sin, by removing restraint: it is all for present interest. A sail without compass or shore.

An old apothecary, who attended me in my illness, and who was an avowed Deist, lewd in practice and prophane in conversation, the bottle and card table his delight, used to ridicule religion. Attending me in a disorder which he deemed incurable, he assured me that twenty-four hours would determine my fate. "If ever you find yourself," doctor, said I,

similar condition, may you enjoy, as I do, the know-
the only way to God, by faith in a Mediator." He
I never talk of religion to any person, and I hope no
ntion it to me."

CONVERSATION IN A STAGE COACH.

To show the ignorance of men, who *profess* to believe the gospel of Christ, which they do not understand, and their enmity to good men, who both understand and enjoy it, and live under its influence, I will relate part of a conversation I once had with a Clergyman of the Church of England. Riding together in the stage coach from London to Maidenhead, our conversation turned upon the slave-trade. We were ignorant of each other. The clergyman said, the abolition of it would be injurious to the slaves and to England. As I remained silent a little time, he imagined that I thought upon the subject as he did. 'But, sir,' said he, 'I do not wonder at the investigation of the subject, for it is well known that Mr. Wilberforce is a *Methodist*.' 'If he is a Methodist,' said I, 'there is nothing wonderful in his zeal against the slave-trade. I have often heard of the Methodists; pray, sir, what do you think of them?' 'Think of them, sir,' replied the clergyman, 'O, they are a set of ignorant, wild enthusiasts; they are always pleading for faith without works; I have a number of them in my parish, and they are a very troublesome people.' To this I replied, 'truly, sir, you have done the Methodists an honour, in saying that Mr. Wilberforce is one of them. But I cannot reconcile your *assertion* with *facts*. You say, Mr. Wilberforce is an "ignorant" man. Now, if Mr. W. is destitute of good sense, what must the thousands of inhabitants of Yorkshire be, who have chosen him for their representative? And how could he compose so admirable a speech against the slave-trade—a speech admired by men of the first talents in the House of Commons? I have read the speech, and do not recollect any proof of ignorance. And as to his being a "wild enthusiast," I assure you that Mr. W. regularly attends the Church of England, where the gospel is preached—he lives in the practice of family worship—he is a very upright man in his dealings—is very kind to the distressed—and his zeal against *slavery*, is a strong proof that his religion has refined his humanity.'

" ' Perhaps,' resumed he, ' you are a Methodist, sir!' ' Indeed, sir,' said I, ' according to your remarks, it is my honour, if I am; for if Mr. W. is a Methodist, then a Methodist is one who, believing in Jesus Christ as his Saviour from the curse, guilt and power of sin; adjusts his temper and conduct, in public and private life, by the word of God; and thus, though he expects salvation without works, his faith produces them. If this is Methodism, sir, may I live and die a *Methodist!* Now, sir, you say the Methodists who live in your parish, *trouble* you: but why should you be troubled? unless they *live* better than you *preach*. A good man, sir, is generally a *trouble* to a bad man; especially to a worldly clergyman—for the same reason that righteous Abel was troublesome to Cain, because Cain's *works* were evil and his brother's righteous. If you knew Christ and preached Christ, then *Methodists*, so far from troubling you would be your greatest comforters.' "

Upon this, he pulled out a newspaper from his pocket and desired me to desist, or he would quit the coach. I mildly answered, that, as he had begun by a railing accusation against Mr. Wilberforce and the Methodists, I had endeavoured to convince him that he knew not the meaning of the term *Methodist*, and that he had borne false witness against his *neighbour*, and that a God of truth and justice would never be pleased by fixing a name of reproach on a good man, whose *faith* in Christ, led him to *imitate* Christ—nor would a just God accept of railing against them from a clergyman, or his blind hearers, who depised them.

" ' Sir,' he hastily replied, ' I'll leave coach.' ' Happily for you sir,' said I, ' *you* are not my *slave*. This is the land of *liberty*, and he who prefers to ride upon the top of a coach rather than *within, may be* accommodated."

" Reader—Do you think, that slander is justice to a man because your pride and self-denial and persecution, calls him a Methodist? or can it be pleasing to the " God of truth because it gratifies your enmity? Do not you often rail and laugh against men who fear God, when your *conscience* condemns you for it? And repeat things against them, the truth of which you do not *believe*? And " shall not God search this out, who judgeth the secrets of the heart?" You may *cover* your sins for a season; but the day of *reckoning* approaches; you must soon hear your own conscience

nounce you condemnation. Self-deluded creature! can you imagine that your *want* of real religion can justify your contempt of those who *possess* it? Persevere in making sport of God's servants, as fools and hypocrites; treat the Bible as a fable, and religion as a farce, a few weeks longer; till death and judgment shall convince you that "the Lord God of recompences, will surely *requite!*"'

INTERVIEW WITH A LADY FROM INDIA, &c.

Towards the latter end of the year 1811, Mr. Cooke was travelling between London and Maidenhead in the coach. One of his companions was a young woman of about twenty-four, of genteel appearance and manners, but evidently labouring under great distress and anxiety of mind. As soon as a favourable opportunity occurred, he endeavoured to discover the nature of her distress. He soon learned, that she was a native of India, but had been married very young; and, having a great desire to travel, had come with her husband to England. After a short time, he had deserted her. Almost frantic and bewildered, she had been searching all the inns on the various great roads, to find the unprincipled man. Forlorn and friendless, in a strange land, she was still in pursuit, though reduced almost to a state of despair—wandering from place to place in search of the only object of her affections, and quite ignorant of any considerations that might mitigate her trouble, or administer support under it. A little conversation showed Mr. Cooke that she was not merely an entire stranger to religion; but when he attempted to direct her to its consolations, he found that she was an enemy, and that her mind had been prejudiced against it by infidel objections. With patience and attention, he heard all she had to say against the Bible and religion. He met and answered her objections; and then directed her, as a sinner, to implore reconciliation to God—and as a distressed and injured woman, to seek support from that Bible she had despised, and cast herself upon the mercy and grace of that God whom it reveals, but whose friendship she had not hitherto sought. He continued the conversation till they parted. She was powerfully impressed with what he said, and at parting he gave her his address. It pleased God signally to bless his remarks to

this distressed lady. She began, in the midst of her trouble, to seek the Lord, and he was pleased to lead her to those sources of consolation in the Bible, which composed her mind, and opened to her a prospect of a happier life and a better world. She wrote a letter soon after to Mr. Cooke, in which she informed him of the great change wrought in her mind, and of the support and composure she had derived from those momentous truths to which he had been the instrument of directing her attention. In terms of the liveliest gratitude, she mentioned his kindness, sympathy, and instruction. In a second letter, written when she was about to return to India to her friends, though without her husband, she gives some few particulars respecting herself, and displays, in an interesting light, the pleasing change which had been wrought in her sentiments and feelings. The following is an extract from this letter, which is commenced by stating that the writer was on the eve of departing from England for India. She says:—

"To remind you of your past kindness, and, consequently, of my indelible obligations, would only be a repetition of what I have already faintly attempted, but can never sufficiently express. My return to India, though an event long the object of my most favourite thoughts and sanguine expectations, I could have wished had happened on happier terms; since I must inevitably endure many a bitter pang, when I am absolutely under the cruel necessity of leaving behind, *him* in whom is centred my whole dependence and happiness. Thus it is ever with human affairs! The alluring cup, ere it reaches the longing lip, is frequently contaminated by the infusion of poisonous weeds, which totally destroy every fancied pleasure, which our flattering imaginations had anticipated. An over-ruling Providence has wisely ordained it should be so, in order to wean our affections from the trifling occurrences of this short state of probation, and as a further inducement to place them upon the truly essential and paramount points of futurity. It is said to be the privilege of friendship sometimes to be troublesome: in the present instance, I have much reason to fear having involuntarily encroached greatly beyond its limits. But a communication of our distresses to a real and sincere friend, particularly when arising from mental causes, is undoubtedly an alleviation to the afflicted mind. Such a friend must I ever consider one, who has justly proved himself so, in every sense of the word, at a most trying and urgent crisis, when every spark of hope was nearly extinguished, and I was

sinking on the verge of despair; then religion, with her benign influence, re-kindled the torch, and snatched my soul from perdition. Had I chanced to have met with so persuasive a monitor prior to my unfortunate peregrinations, I had escaped much unnecessary trouble, also, the loss of what I can now never cease to regret*. The principles you instilled would have taught me contentment, the mother of true happiness, in whatever station of life the Almighty might have been pleased to place me; far more so, when, in my native land, among my own relatives, in the entire possession of a husband's affections, or, at least, having no reason to think otherwise; the darling and only child of a fond and affectionate mother, and, in point of pecuniary circumstances, infinitely superior to any in all probability I can ever aspire to again; even female vanity, gratified to an extent unknown in this country, from the customary homage ladies are used to receive in India. Alas! how widely is the scene reversed, through a foolish and idle curiosity, too prevalent in young people, to become the *traveller*, which often originates from secret vanity. This it was first seized my infatuated senses; being encouraged by the promise of returning again, of which, from the state of our affairs, I did not entertain the least doubt. Therefore, instead of objecting, I eagerly embraced the project of visiting Europe; else, I am persuaded it would not have taken place. Let me not then repine at past advantages, but, with proper resignation to the will of God, meet the just punishment of my former follies, and rather let it serve as a timely warning, by endeavouring in future to avoid similar errors.

"Adieu, dear Sir, may you meet with the reward justly due to true piety, here, as well as that which infallibly awaits the righteous hereafter; and in your daily prayers for the miserable, may you sometimes deign to remember,

" Your Asiatic Convert."

MINISTERIAL VISITS TO THE SICK.

—— This day I visited a sick man, totally ignorant of God and himself. I opened the Law of God to him, and

* Alluding to her abandonment by her husband, which had been the result of her " desire to see the world."

showed him his transgressions in thought, word, and deed, and the curse he was under as a sinner. He was sullen and silent; and when I prayed for him, he pretended to be asleep. I then set before him the love of Christ, in dying to bear the curse of the chief of sinners. He opened his eyes, was all attention, and exclaimed, "I thought there was no mercy for such a wretch." I informed him that Jesus died for the wretched and the lost. He burst into tears, cried for mercy, looked to the Saviour, and was delivered from the guilt of his sin, the hardness of his heart, the fear of death, and the oppressive weight of his trial; and soon "magnified the Lord, and his spirit rejoiced in him, as God his Saviour."

—— Called to visit Mr. B—, suddenly afflicted with cancer in his cheek. He was "a hearer only," living in the lust of the flesh, under a profession of religion. He saw and felt the hand of God; said he had "received the sentence of death in himself," and must obey the summons. He was deeply humbled; cried day and night for mercy; read the Word of God; yielded his soul to Christ for salvation; blessed God for the cancer, as a display of the mercy of God, and the depth of his wisdom. He suffered patiently, continued instant in prayer, mourned over the evil of sin, condemned himself, justified God in his affliction, admired the grace which sanctified his sufferings, warned his visitors against being hardened under the Gospel, through the deceitfulness of sin; exhorted them to "trust in the mighty Saviour's name," and died "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God."

—— Mrs. ——— who had lived with an income of 800*l.* a year in the West Indies, became, on the death of her husband, dependant on her children and friends. Accustomed to govern slaves, she was haughty, full of enmity to religion, and tyrannical in her conduct. She heard me some time in vain; but, on leaving home for Bristol, I preached from "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (in its object) is counted for righteousness."

Her mind was enlightened; she saw herself to be ungodly; believed in Jesus from the heart unto justification; read the Word of God night and day; walked in the joy of God's

salvation; forgot her poverty, or rather, was thankful for it; and bore her protracted affliction with "all long-suffering and joyfulness." She died, in "full assurance of hope," and left "a sweet odour of Christ," and his all-sufficient grace to her relatives and friends.

—— On Thursday I was sent for by Miss ——— a well-educated, sensible, amiable creature. Alarmed at my entering the room, she turned pale, and assured me that she had always *lived a good life.* I asked what she meant by a good life? She answered "a *moral* life." I asked her if *the law of God, the Ten Commands,* formed the *standard,* or *rule,* of her morality? "Certainly," she replied. I then opened the law in its purity, spirituality, equity, goodness, and perfection, and the consequence of transgressing it: and after praying with her, I left her.

Friday. On seating myself by her, she exclaimed, "O sir! if the Law of God is the rule of morality, I have never been even moral. I confined my notions of goodness, morality, and religion to *outward* expressions; but this law requires my *heart, all* my heart, and condemns every *thought, word,* and *act,* that is sinful. I feel convinced that I am *a sinner,* a condemned sinner." Never did I see the rapid progress of saving knowledge in any case equal to her's. She needed it, for I found she had a cancer in her mouth; all her teeth came out at twenty-three years of age. Two holes were formed at the bottom of the lower jaw, so that she retained liquid in her mouth with difficulty.

My future visits were peculiarly interesting. On entering the room one day, she said, "I pity you, my dear sir; the room must be so very offensive, from my breath; but I bless God for this affliction. It is very great, and through the grace of the Saviour, very light. I envy not the most healthy, wealthy, or honourable. *Now!*

> "*Now!* I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the skies;
> I bid farewell to ev'ry fear,
> And wipe my weeping eyes."

"There is not a fellow-creature on earth with whom I would exchange conditions. God is gracious; the blood of Christ is my refuge; I am very happy—my trial is short—I cheerfully resign my life—I fear not death, it will be my short passage to Heaven."

Thus my encouragements to visit the sick multiply, and bid me "always abound in *this* work of the Lord."

CONVERSION OF A MEMBER OF "THE HELL-FIRE CLUB."

—— Called to preached in L—— H——'s chapel,—at the opening—a tradesman heard and lived.

Six years afterwards, he came into the vestry at Bristol Tabernacle, after partaking of the Lord's Supper with five hundred souls, and related the following facts. He began:—"Dear Sir, you do not know me, but I know you. Six years since I belonged to the "Hell-fire Club," at Reading, in Berkshire. We always endeavoured to coin a new oath for the evening, and the chairman decided who had the pre-eminence. As I was walking from home, in my way to the club, I was asking myself what sin I had not committed, and I would commit it before I went to bed:—what new oath I should swear? Passing on, I saw a light, and heard your voice from the pulpit, in the street. I paused—went on, saying, I would return after the club-meeting. Second thought prevailed, and I went into the chapel, fearing on my return the service might be over, and I should have no sport. I entered; you repeated your text: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; and whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whoso blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor that which is to come." You described the nature of the sin—the reason of its being unpardonable. Secondly, shewed who had *not* committed it, and proved their sin all pardonable.

Instead of going to the club, I went home—entered my bed-room—locked myself in—fell upon my knees—thanked God I was out of hell, and it was possible I might escape it for ever. All my sins were pardonable. This was good news indeed, after a full persuasion that Hell would be my portion, and a frequent wish to die, that I might know the worst. I read, prayed, heard the gospel, looked by faith to Christ, and soon enjoyed pardon, peace and liberty of access to God.

" I now enjoy communion with God and his church—and in me

"Jehovah here resolved to shew
What his Almighty Great can do."—Hallelujah!

It was remarkable, that Mr. —— who heard me, and afterwards left Reading, and joined our church at Maidenhead, told me, that he felt a prejudice against me, for my vanity in taking such a text; but God convinced him as I proceeded, that " my work was before me, and my reward with me." He was one of the most judicious private Christians I ever knew. God justified his remark: the sermon proved " the power of God to salvation."

A SUICIDE RESCUED FROM TEMPTATION.

—— Coming out from a sale this afternoon, a genteel man walked with me in a field, and related the following events.

" Four years since I heard you preach at the Tabernacle from these words—" They were tempted:" I was deeply impressed with the discourse. Three years after, I was under a temptation to suicide; and suffering from it for months. It was at length suggested, that it was lawful and manly. I had never spoken to you, but recollecting the discourse, I thought, " you knew what sore temptation meant, and must have felt the same."

" I resolved to write to you, and request by return of post your answer, which I solemnly resolved and declared to you should decide my fate. I concealed my name, although in a respectable business in the Strand. You wrote me a very long, sympathizing, and suitable letter. " The snare was broken and I was delivered."

Thus did divine Providence connect the *present* hearing a sermon with a *future trial* and deliverance—dispose the tempted soul to ask, and me to give advice, which proved such " a word in season," as to " overcome the wicked one."

On reviewing the awful dispensation, the good man was astonished how far the enemy of souls had led him astray, and at the fatal resolution he had formed.

Perhaps the trial was a stripe for some sin; certainly it displayed the malice and power of fallen angels, and the compassion, wisdom, faithfulness and power of God in a

Mediator, who "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and make a way for his escape." May I learn gratitude for the mercy which preserves my body, my reason, my faith, from the power of Satan!" O, the kindness of that covenant which places believers in the hands of a Mediator, who is "able to succour them that are tempted;" and will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; but bring forth judgment (that is, his judicial proceedings) to victory!"

PREJUDICES

AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION REMOVED.

—— Mrs. S., a very intelligent, pious woman, sister to an eminent clergyman of London, heard me yesterday, and was strongly prejudiced against me, because I preached the doctrine of election. I told her I had no choice: the doctrine was not mine; nor did the evidence rest on the word *elect*, or *election*. I advised her to read the fifth and sixth chapters of John, in which the word election did not occur; but which were full of the doctrine itself. Mrs. —— followed my advice, and in a few days was confirmed in the belief of this truth. I then advised her to read the 17th chapter of John; and she said it was full of the same truth. I asked her to what conclusion her experience led on the subject? Whether she had chosen Christ as the Saviour of her soul? "Yes!" she exclaimed. "And do you think he has chosen you?" "Yes! I do;" said she. I rejoined, "If you chose him first, you made yourself to differ, and salvation is of works. If divine choice was first, your choice of Christ was the *effect* of it; and salvation is of grace."

"This," added Mrs. —— "is the *fact*." "Then," I concluded, "*fact*, matter of fact, establishes the doctrine of election."

She never more cavilled at the election of grace; but read the Scriptures, and prayed for divine teaching, and with a blessing "made her calling and election sure," that is, *evident* to her own soul, as it was certain in itself. Drawn to Christ, by divine teaching, she learned of the Father, that he had "given her to Christ," to redeem and save her. Her "peace now flowed like a river," bearing all objections before it; and her "blessedness was as the waves of the sea;" and "all

thy children shall be TAUGHT of the Lord; and great shall be the PEACE of thy children." Let me still learn to read and hear the Word with simplicity, and implore "the spirit of truth," until I can "set my seal to it."

CONVERSION

OF A PROFLIGATE YOUNG MAN.

W— S— in his youth, had regularly attended my ministry; but left his parents, and enlisted for a soldier.

He returned home burdened with a mortal disease, and accumulated guilt. He sent for me; but my visits were apparently lost on him. At length he told me, that not any thing that I had said to him in conversation, nor my prayers to God for him, made the least impression on his mind. He had sinned with a high hand against convictions and advantages, and sunk into gloomy despair. Never did I feel the importance of prayer for others more deeply. This poor distressed creature said his heart was as hard and as cold as a stone;—not with regard to his disease, his death, and future misery—but he could not feel his *sin*,—nor any disposition to look to *Christ* for salvation—not the least inclination to pray for mercy. It was too *late*,—he had sinned away his day of grace,—he was left to reflect, that "he had destroyed himself." I pleaded the promise of God—"I will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh; but for this I will be INQUIRED of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

I perceived it was the prerogative of God to work this change; and that prayer was the ordained means of obtaining it. He could not pray for himself; but "the house of Israel," the church of God could pray for it. "Send for the elders of the church; and they shall pray for him." I prayed in faith in the power and mercy of God,—and as an act of obedience to his command. It was "the obedience of faith." I requested the church to pray for him, believing that "the inward fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." —

One morning he sent for me, and informed me that he had no sleep the preceding night. "God held his eyes waking;" and "POURED upon him the spirit of grace and supplication." His heart was melted into godly sorrow for sin,—he

"confessed his transgressions to the Lord,"—cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He trusted in, and pleaded the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. God heard his prayer, gave him power to believe in Christ for pardon, holiness, strength, and comfort; and to his dying hour, this was his language:—"O Lord, I will praise thee: for though thou was angry with me; thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold! God is my salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid, for the Lord is my strength and my song; and is become MY salvation."

"What shall I say to these things?"—I will take fresh courage in prayer,—I will never despair of the salvation of any sinner, on this side of hell—I will *use means* and *trust in the promises* of God,—I will adore the grace, that honours such an unworthy instrument. I will preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and the sovereignty, freeness, fullness, extent, and efficacy of that grace which brings salvation. I will go to "the house of mourning;" and mourn over, and pray for poor suffering sinners, dead in sin,—hoping, that "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," by my feeble voice; and live!"

"A brand plucked out of the fire!" once more, Hallelujah!

CONVERSATION

WITH A YOUNG LADY IN AFFLICTION.

Miss W. never evinced any signs of religion, under every advantage of a religious education, and the ministry of the Word; but in her affliction, her mind was awakened, taught of God, and established in the truth. On my reading to her a few verses of the 119th Psalm, when I had finished "the law, or word of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver." She requested me to stop, and then addressed me as follows:

"Gold and silver are dearer to most persons; and *thousands* of gold and silver especially. To obtain it, they spare no labour nor suffering. But if I now possessed them, what could they do for me? They could not cure my disease,—nor relieve me from guilt,—nor give my conscience peace,—nor render me patient and resigned,—nor conquer my fears of

death,—nor inspire me with an expectation of Heaven. But the Word and Spirit of God have done all this for me. In the Word of God I have learnt my lost condition,—the salvation of Christ, and the mercy of God towards me. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray;' not in immoral conduct, but in the disposition of my heart. I was moral in my conduct; but indifferent towards God, my soul, and the salvation of Christ. While confined to my bed my eyes were opened—my heart was opened to speak to God. I thought of him day and night. I had many sleepless nights, in which, 'I communed with my own heart on my bed, and was still; and my spirit made diligent search.' I wept, and 'watered my couch with my tears,' in reviewing my unprofitable life, under great religious advantages. 'I cried to the Lord in my trouble, and he heard me: and delivered me from all my distresses,—from all my fears.' My dear friends, pity and pray for me; and I will bless God that I have been afflicted. Yes, my dear Sir, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' Good for my soul, good for me now, and good for me for ever. This is no matter of *doubt* to me, although it may seem a *judgment* to be cut off in my youth. But,—I *know*,—Yes, 'I KNOW, O Lord, that thy *judgments* are good; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' This is a great thing to know. I never knew it before. I thought that health and life and prosperity were good; but this is a new lesson, to learn that affliction is good. None but God can teach this lesson. 'None teacheth like him.' Youth do not even *expect* affliction; but 'It is good for *me* to bear the yoke of affliction in my YOUTH.' I never was so happy in health, and I have no wish to return to it. I possess the 'one thing needful;' and now I can say,—'The will of the Lord be done.'" In this frame of mind she died.

——But, myself! Beholding the condescension and grace of God, in blessing my feeble efforts in conversation and preaching, why is not my heart more deeply impressed, more constantly excited, to "the labour of love," and more "rejoicing in hope?" With such confirmation of revealed truth—such ample encouragements to activity—such grateful love returned from those to whom I have been "made a blessing,"—what ought I to be and to do? If I sin, if I am negligent, if I am lukewarm, if I am ungrateful or unbelieving,—what "shame and confusion of face belong to me!"

Yet these instances of usefulness are not sufficient to keep alive my heart towards God. No! "I need the influence of

thy grace, to speed me in thy way." The religion of *office* may become *mechanical*, and be made a substitute for *personal* godliness. Oh, what need of the exhortation, take heed "unto THYSELF!" My office, my knowledge, my advantages, my experience, my success, my obligations aggravate my sins. My convictions of sin are more clear, more extensive, more fixed, more permanent than ever. I feel more need of the blood and spirit of Christ—more need of the life of faith in the mercy of God. I am more sensible of the darkness and hardness of my heart, compared with what I ought to perceive and feel. I dread the thought of resting in sound sentiments, without holy affections.—"Lord, increase *my* faith."

VILLAGE PREACHING.

When Mr. C. first planted the standard of the Cross at Burnham, in the year 1791, Satan's agents were in an uproar—the house was surrounded—the hearers were pelted with rotten eggs, &c.; and, so great was the malice of the enemies, that the stock of rotten eggs being exhausted, they actually used good ones. Mr. C. was burnt in effigy by an immense crowd one evening when preaching there, and after service, having to pass through the crowd, there was a general outcry, and when he was getting over the stile at the church-yard, some wretch endeavoured to throw a band of straw, which had been well pitched and formed into a ring of fire, over his head, that it might fall on his shoulders and injure him! Providentially, it went beyond its object. The cruel are cowards, and the trembling hand of guilt could not take a steady aim. The wretch ran to hide his guilty head among the crowd. Mr. C. stood coolly and calmly on the stile, and, with a firm and exalted voice, exclaimed, "Why does he run away? why is he afraid? the guilty alone are cowards—I do not run." He then addressed the multitude in a strain of kind, bold, and winning eloquence—they were ashamed—melted away, and opposition so public and noisy ceased. Still the devil was not quiet; the present place of worship was built, and the children of darkness could not bear to see the *light* of Gospel truth beaming and the day advancing. Petty malice now vented itself in paltry interruptions. Birds were let loose

to put out the candles, &c. One circumstance I have heard him relate, which was highly characteristic. On one occasion, a young man disturbed the worship by the barking of a dog. This was repeated again and again. Mr. C.'s keen eye detected the offender. He closed the Bible, came out of the pulpit, went directly to the young man, and said, "Sir, I desire you will take that dog out of your pocket, whose ears you have been pinching to make him disturb the worship of God." At first the youth denied. Mr. C. said, "I insist, sir, on your standing up." The little dog was found in his pocket, and he was overwhelmed with confusion. Mr. Cooke then addressed him to this effect: "You are by profession a gentleman, and the son of a magistrate, and I am sure your father would be greatly grieved at your *illegal* conduct. You have broken the laws of your country, by which we are secured in the peaceable worship of God, agreeably to the dictates of our own consciences, and your offence is highly aggravated by your station and profession: it is not, however, our wish to punish or to exact penalty; we only desire to be permitted quietly to worship God; and, on one consideration, I will overlook your offence—that is, that you and your companions sit quietly there till the service is closed, that you promise solemnly never to disturb us again—and that you beg pardon of the congregation by saying, that you are sorry that you have interrupted them." The terms were gratefully accepted, and no material interruption was ever afterwards attempted.

THE EFFECT OF MR. COOKE'S ZEAL IN VILLAGE PREACHING, UPON THE MIND OF A NEIGHBOURING CLERGYMAN.

A highly interesting incident stood connected with Mr. Cooke's early and zealous village labours. The late Rev. E. Townsend, the former Vicar of Bray, mentioned to more than one of Mr. Cooke's friends, that he was first led to serious thought by noticing Mr. Cooke's zealous and ardent labours in the villages. Mr. Townsend, at the time alluded to, was quite a man of the world; much engaged in cricket and other sports. He was led, as he expressed himself, to ask such questions as these:—What does this young minister see in religion, and in the souls of men, that I do not see?

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HIS TREATMENT OF TWO GENTLEMEN WHO BROKE HIS WINDOWS.

Many years ago, about midnight, he happened to be reading in his study: Mrs. C. had retired to the bed-room, which was in the front of the house; and was upon the point of getting into bed, when suddenly a very large stone came through the window, and fell upon the bed where she was about to repose. Mr. C. alarmed by the noise, started from his seat, and ran to the bed-room. Finding that Mrs. C. was uninjured, and that the outrage had been committed from the street, he hastened down, and went quietly out; and from his own door proceeded towards the town. He had not gone far before he perceived, by the light of a lamp, at a little distance, two persons walking away from him. On silently approaching nearer, he saw symptoms of intoxication, and discerned that they both wore a genteel appearance. He followed them at a little distance, until they entered one of the principal inns in the town. Having watched for a short time, and found that they remained in the house, he proceeded no further with his investigation, but returned home, and quietly retired to rest. At a suitable hour in the morning, he went to the inn; and being well known to the proprietor, he readily obtained all the information that he needed, respecting the parties in question. He ascertained that one of the individuals was a captain, then residing in the town, and that the other was the officiating clergyman of a parish in the neighbourhood. Having thus prepared himself by what information he could collect, he went forthwith to the gentleman of the sword, and found him just preparing to take his breakfast. He commenced the interview in words to the following effect:—" Sir, my name is John Cooke: last night, at a very late hour, a window was broken in my house, by a large stone, which endangered the life of my wife. I have some reason to think that you can give me such information as will enable me to bring the offender to justice."

At first the captain appeared exceedingly indignant, and rudely desired Mr. Cooke to begone, for that he knew nothing of him or his window. Mr. Cooke, however, was not to be frowned away, he persevered in assuring the gentleman that he should not have troubled him, if he had not possessed strong reasons for thinking that he could impart some information upon the subject. He therefore appealed to his feelings, as a man of honour and a gentleman, to say candidly, whether he could assist him in this painful business. The military gentleman, however, persisted in denying all knowledge of the affair, and, at length, appeared wrought up to great wrath: he again ordered Mr. Cooke to begone, but he remained like a rock, in the presence of the warrior, unterrified by his anger, and unmoved by his resolute denial. At length he said, "It is of no use, sir, for you to put yourself into a passion, and to storm at me. If you will sit down and hear me calmly, we will soon bring this business to a close."

The captain found that he had no ordinary man to deal with; and at last seated himself on a chair, while Mr. Cooke took one, and placed himself before him. He then said, "Now, sir, since you will give *me* no information respecting this business, I must inform you of what I know, and can prove. It was yourself, in company with the Rev. Mr. ——, who broke my window last night." At this disclosure, the captain was silent, and gave symptoms of conscious guilt and fear, which Mr. C.'s keen eye soon detected. He then proceeded:—Now, sir, I have nothing more to say, but merely to inform you of the conditions on which I shall overlook and forgive this outrage; they are three:—1. You must repair the injury done to the window—2. You and the Rev. —— must offer an apology to me, before a few of my select friends—And, 3. You must each of you consent to receive an address for five minutes, upon the subject, from me, in my house, before those friends. You will inform Mr. —— of these terms, and let me know your determination before such an hour this evening."

The captain, finding that Mr. Cooke was in the possession of all the facts, now appeared completely calmed, and very polite. He replied, that he could say nothing to it, until he had consulted his friend, which he should do immediately. Mr. C. then withdrew.

The appointed hour came, and passed, bringing no answer from the parties concerned. Mr. C. then went to his solicitor, in the town, and began to tell him the story. He soon per-

ceived that the professional man was indisposed to advise any legal measures. Upon this discovery, he said: "O, I perceive the gentlemen have already been with you, and confessed the whole business. You are too honourable a man to deny it: should I want evidence, you cannot refuse to acknowledge that you are acquainted with their guilt. Good day; I have nothing more to say."

The result of this interview was, that the legal man advised the gentlemen immediately to accede to Mr. C.'s proposals, as the best way of preventing a public exposure; assuring them, at the same time, that "*Mr. C. had them as fast as a nail.*" The offending gentlemen then made application to be permitted to comply with his terms. The time was fixed—not their time, his own, and one that would suit the convenience of his friends.

The parties met, the expense of repairing the window was readily defrayed, the apology was made in polite and suitable terms; and "Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Cooke, laying his watch on the table, "you are each to hear me for the space of five minutes."

He first addressed the military man, and reminded him, that his commission imposed on him the obligation of protecting the lives and property of his majesty's peaceable subjects. He showed him the crime and disgrace of being the first to break the peace, and endanger life: he faithfully admonished him of the guilt of drunkenness and disorder in a man of his profession.

He then turned to the clergyman; and, with a power of description and feeling peculiar to himself, and strikingly appropriate, he exhibited the scenes of the judgment-day. He described the awful situation in which he would find himself involved, when his ruined parishioners should point to him, and cry, "Lord! there is my teacher!—he led me in the way of drunkenness, riot, and sin; he was the cause of my everlasting misery!" Thus he laid open the scenes before him, and then exhorted him to repent, to study his Bible, and to set a better example to his parishioners.

The parties deeply felt the propriety and force of his address, and were overcome by his kindnes and pity, in the midst of the severity with which he had treated their offence. They reported, that they had never met with such a man in their lives; and that he was qualified to be made chief magistrate of the town.

Upon this singular occurrence, we find the following laconic

observations among Mr. Cooke's papers:—"Mr. ——, envying a dissenting minister in his neighbourhood, in a fit of intoxication, broke the windows of the dissenter—endangered the life of his wife, the large stones falling near her pillow. The clergyman was detected, mortified, and so confounded, by the dissenting minister's faithful address and ready forgiveness of the offence, that he left his situation, deeply in debt to the neighbouring inns, and occasioned many of his late hearers to attend the dissenting meeting. Many of those who first dissent from disgust, afterwards become dissenters from principle. Whatever doctrines may be established, they cannot establish bad characters in the esteem of the hearers of such clergymen. Such men may condemn *infidels*, while their own levity, intemperance, profaneness, and hypocrisy, increase the number of infidels, and afford the absurd plea of their justification."

ANECDOTE OF A BOY WHO ROBBED HIS GARDEN.

"'As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men.' Young master P——, caught a cold at the Blue Coat School; although wet to the skin, was not allowed to change his clothes. The cold seized his lungs, and he was sent to Maidenhead for change of air. He robbed my garden of its fruit daily; and when detected, endeavoured to conceal the theft by lies. I convicted him, and he was overwhelmed with the loss of character which he anticipated. I assured him of my forgiveness, and directed him to pray to God to forgive him, for Christ's sake. I treated him kindly, and gained his ear and his heart. He took every opportunity of being in my company; and came to hear me. His attention was fixed—his understanding was opened—his memory filled with the truths he heard—his conscience was awakened, and his heart won to Christ.

"He returned home, was confined to his bed, and in a short time died. I met his father, who with a full heart and broken sentences, thanked me for my attention to his little son. 'Never before,' said he, 'did I see religion so lovely. My dear boy talked of you, your sermons, the Saviour, and heaven, with such hope, and joy, and patience, and thankfulness, and

resignation to God, as I shall never forget. He feared not death; he had no wish to live.' His mother visited me. With tears of grateful joy, she bowed to the will of God, whose wisdom and mercy had rendered so painful and so speedy a change, the greatest blessing of her dear little boy's earthly existence. So I had assured him it would prove. May its effects be found an eternal memorial of the grace of God in the souls of his relations."

CONVERSATION

WITH A STRANGER IN TRAVELLING.

After an easy introduction on the weather, politics, and accidents, on perceiving that my companion was a rich farmer, I asked him some questions on agriculture, which he readily answered; and was pleased with my inquiries.

At length, I admired the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in the progress and multiplication of the grain, from thirty to sixty and a hundred grains from one; and in the eastern countries, to three and four hundred. I pitied the farmer who walked over his fields without seeing God and acknowledging his providence. I mentioned the knots in the stalk of wheat, without which it could not support the ear; but would break. I noticed the chaff in covering the grain, and the knots as so many filtering stones for the juices; the power of the sun, in drawing up the juices to nourish the corn.

He said, "I like farming; but not farming and religion."

"But, sir, the art of husbandry 'cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in council and excellent in working' (Isai. 28); and that wonderful operation of the God of nature, should be acknowledged with grateful admiration."

He said, "he had done very well without religion by industry and care, and could not see the advantage of mixing religion with farming." You have prospered, by a blessing on your labours, said I; for it is "God who giveth the increase." "Pray, sir, will affectionate gratitude to God injure your land, your corn, or your health? Is it a loss of *time* to possess a

grateful heart? Does not gratitude increase enjoyment, and is not this an advantage? Do not God and conscience approve of gratitude, as well as prayer, for his blessing."

"I hope to go to heaven, sir, as well as others."

"But you might as well hope for a crop of corn without ploughing and sowing, as to hope for heaven without using the means of obtaining it."

"The scripture declares, that 'what a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' You must plough and sow spiritually, by faith and prayer, repentance and diligence, if you would reap spiritual blessings. If you sow beans, you do not reap wheat. If you sow wheat sparingly, you do not reap wheat plentifully. Do you think, sir, if you sow to the flesh, by indulging sloth and the lusts of the flesh, that God will reward your sins with heaven? No, if you sow sin, you will reap punishment. Life is your seed time, and you will reap in eternity, what you sowed in time."

"All have their faults, sir, and God is merciful."

"True: and therefore he gives a blessing to industry; and you cannot expect a harvest without a seed-time; neither can you expect salvation without the means of obtaining it. And God is merciful in appointing the means of salvation and granting success in using the means."

"'I have done without religion,' said he,—that is, said I, 'God has exercised patience towards you, and blessed your labours with success. This proves his *goodness* also. Your wealth is a talent for which you must give an account."

"Then, I had rather be without these talents."

"No, sir, you desired wealth, and God has granted it: you also desire to use it for yourself, not for him; and for *this* you must give an account."

"I don't like religion, (with a sneer), and I told you so."

"You are not a singular farmer, sir; I have read of one whom you greatly resemble. The farmer to whom I allude, finding his ground very productive, and his barns too small, resolved on building larger barns and filling them; and saying to his soul, I have goods laid up for many years, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But God said, 'thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee:—then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?'

"Now sir, I think you must see yourself in this picture. Here is a farmer, very rich,—living to himself in health, ease, and pleasure, 'without God in the world.' No doubt his neighbours envied and flattered him; but no one dared to reprove so rich a man. And if no one reproved his sins, and

many flattered them, as virtues, he never heard the truth. This accounts for our Lord's words, 'how hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God.' But although he thought himself wise, and others wished to be like him, God addresses him differently,—'Thou FOOL!'

"Why, sir, do you suppose, the only wise God called him a Fool?" He was silent.

"But, candidly, do not you think he was a fool?"

"I shall not say, sir."

"Well, sir, if you will allow me to hazard an opinion, he appears a fool:

"First,—Because he preferred his body to his soul.

"Secondly,—Because he preferred the world to God: "eat, drink, and be merry," was the extent of his aim.

"Thirdly,—Because he preferred time to eternity; "thou hast goods laid up for *many years*."

"Fourthly,—Because he lived as if he should never die; and whilst presuming on many years, exposed his soul to all the horrors of sudden death, without repentance, without forgiveness, without holiness, and without hope."

[*Here the conversation appears to have ended.*]

CONVERSATIONS WITH A RICH FARMER IN ILLNESS.

The following conversations will illustrate the power of *practical* deism and unbelief, in a farmer, who lived to the age of seventy, seeking his chief good in this life, and expecting to live longer, against the warnings of friends—the faithful testimony of medical gentlemen, and the strongest symptoms of mortal disease.

Mr. Cooke. I hope, sir, you have made your will, that your anxiety occasioned by your worldly affairs, may not counteract your medicine.

Farmer. I hope to do that when I get a little better; I know it is very proper to make my will.

Mr. C. I have made mine in health, to avoid the pain and distress to myself and friends, of having to make it in illness. I shall not die one moment sooner for discharging this duty.

Farmer. It is quite right; but I think of waiting until I have got in my harvest; and then I shall know what I am worth, and can better divide it among my children.

Mr. C. You can as well make it now, leaving what pro-

portions of your property to your children you think right. If you recover, you can alter it; and if you do not, your mind will be more easy; your life will not be shortened by it, and your relatives will be more satisfied.

Farmer. I have not much to leave.

Mr. C. If you die without a will, your heir will have the greatest portion; the family may not agree in dividing the rest; it may alienate them from each other and occasion law-suits, which will render it still less.

Farmer. Well, I will consider of it, and see you another day.

Mr. C. Your disease is threatning, and the longer you delay, the more painful the task. Indeed, disease, the power of medicine, or sudden death, may prevent your making any will.

Farmer. I will wait a little longer; for I do not believe that I am in danger, as the doctors say. If I could but get rid of this fever, I should recover in spite of all.

Mr. C. Your duty to God—your relations and yourself, urges you to "set your house in order;" but as you resolve to defer it, I must leave it with God and your conscience.

After exhorting him to turn his attention to the word of God,—his own heart,—the Saviour, and another world, and commending him to the mercy of God, in solemn prayer, Mr. C. left him.

The second Conversation.

Mr. C. Well, sir, how do I find you this morning?

Farmer. A great deal better; and in a day or two I will settle what we talked of. You shall write my will for me.

Mr. C. That I will most readily do, and take it to a respectable attorney.

Farmer. I don't like lawyers: what would it cost?

Mr. C. The cost will not affect you, and I am sure Mr. Solicitor, I shall employ, is a very honourable man. You have employed him to write your conveyance and make your leases; why not to make your will?

Farmer. I cannot endure lawyers nor doctors.

Mr. C. You might as well say you hate *Farmers;* for there are some of them, as covetous, as dishonest and oppressive, as either lawyers or doctors.

Farmer. I believe so; but I would never trust them.

Mr. C. I do not wish you to trust rogues, liars, or oppressors; but I can find an honourable attorney, and if you object to paying him for the will, your relations will do it.

Farmer. Well, I am exhausted; call the day after to-morrow.

Mr. C. left him; and after calling several times, he excused himself, as being very ill and drowsy.

The third Conversation.

Mr. C. How have you been since I saw you?

Farmer. Very ill indeed; I once thought I should have died, but I am better.

Mr. C. I am come to see you now as a friend to your soul. Your disease has gained strength. Let us talk of your best interest, the salvation of your soul. You are a guilty creature, and need forgiveness; a depraved creature, and in need of holiness; a weak creature, and without spiritual strength; a lost sinner, and need a Saviour.

Farmer. I have been as honest a man as lives on the earth.

Mr. C. But you have been a profane swearer; you have neglected your soul, the sabbath, and your salvation.

Farmer. [A long silence, a deep sigh, and an attempt to compose himself to sleep.]

Mr. C., [taking him by the hand, said,] Sir, "the Son of Man is coming!"

Farmer. Do you think I am in danger?

Mr. C. Yes, sir; "in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh."

Farmer. I am obliged to you; but your thinking death near does not make it so.

Mr. C. True, sir; and your contrary opinion will not prevent death's approach.

Farmer. Then I must prepare myself for it.

Mr. C. You cannot prepare yourself. You must look to God, who can "take away your stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh." God alone can create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you. This, sir, is a *great* change, for "a man to be born again when he is old." And it is a *necessary* change, for the Saviour hath said, "except a man be born again, be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Without this change of heart, there is no repentance, no faith in Christ, no "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Farmer. I cannot do any thing now.

Mr. C. You have been an awful blasphemer. I know a respectable tradesman, who heard you pour forth such horrid

blasphemies, that, after ordering his liquor, he left the room of the inn and his liquor, and never more entered it, saying, it seemed the borders of hell.

[The farmer feigned himself asleep.]

Mr. C. I have told you what God declares the one thing needful: what do *you* think? You have risen early, and been very industrious to get money and keep it. This has been your "one thing needful." What do you now think of it? To what does all your toil amount?

Farmer. Ask those boys in the field before the house, who have been all day flying their kites. They rose and came down. The boys were amused, and went home tired. Thus it has been with me: I have been flying a kite all my life!—Call again.

Mr. C. One thing is needful—to prepare you for death and heaven:—let us pray for it. After again commending him to the sovereign mercy of God, Mr. C. left him.

The fourth Conversation.

Mr. C., hearing at ten in the evening that the farmer was much worse, paid him another visit that evening.

Mr. C. You are gently convulsed; this is something like "the coming of the Son of Man."

Farmer. Yes, it is: and, with a faultering voice, said, I must do as well as I can.

His lips moved for two or three minutes, as if repeating a short prayer. His convulsions increased, and he died next morning.

It is the opinion of some persons, whose lives are the fruit of unbelief, that if, at last, they can but repeat the Lord's Prayer, all will be well. I fear this was the farmer's thought.

How awful and pitiable such characters! How fatal is the influence of the love of money, and the love of the world! It blinds the understanding, hardens the heart, absorbs the attention, and chains the mind to perishing objects. The mind is amused, engrossed, enslaved, and affords a striking illustration of the Apostle's description of a fallen soul, under "the power of darkness!" What force does such an instance give to the Apostle's exhortation—"Take heed, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of your sin!"

REMARKS

ON THE DEATH OF WILLIAM HUNTINGDON.

The newspaper informs me that William Huntingdon is dead.

"Some say he was a good man; others, nay, but he deceived the people." It is difficult to form an impartial opinion of this extraordinary man.

Ignorance and prejudice decide against him, from mere report. The proud scholar envied his popularity, and spake evil of him. Those whose society he avoided, despised him, as conceited. Many were offended with his decisions on their characters. His blunt address gave offence to numbers. The moderate Calvinist and the Arminian called him an Antinomian. Some, who once worshipped him as God, now say, "he hath a devil; why hear ye him?"

He has said to me, "I choose to be as a sparrow on the house-top;" familiarity breeds contempt; I will never visit more than fifty of my people; the less I visit them, the more they respect me.

This was another secret cause of the aversion of many.

But his sentiments of *ministers*, as unconverted, legal, lazy, borrowing each other's discourses, aping the fashions, cautioning their hearers against *him*, contributed most to multiply enemies. Besides this, he confessed to me, that when he preached in any place, his aim was to form a contrast to the minister in his preaching. If the minister was practical, he was doctrinal: if the minister was a doctrinal preacher, he was practical. This I have observed in his preaching, and his advice to preachers, in his "Arminian Skeleton," agrees with his practice. This occasioned, in many, a preference to him, which excited jealousy and divisions. If ministers had endeavoured to excel him in his own way for a time, instead of railing against him as a minister (I know one who always did so), no division would have followed. But when the hearers observed the jealousy of their minister, they were confirmed in their opinion of his pre-eminence, in proportion as it was attempted to prove him a man without *any* excellence.

He had many faults, and was not without his excellences. He was, perhaps, vain of his low origin, his popularity, and the numbers that owned themselves his converts,

especially when he compared himself with many ministers of education, who had small congregations and little success.

Perhaps, too, he made himself the centre of divine operations, as if God was principally engaged in punishing *his* enemies and favouring *his* friends. If he was in want, something like a miracle was wrought to supply him. If he was opposed, divine vengeance was sure to overtake his enemies, "God's bow was made quite naked," to strike them. If he preached, six or ten "were laid at his feet" as converts; or many who were in bondage were, for the first time, brought into the liberty of the Gospel. If he foretold the destiny of a froward man, "his words never fell to the ground."

In his own opinion, he was a standard preacher. If the people he esteemed approved any other preacher, he then affirmed, that preacher "followed *his* rays;" in *his* light they saw light. This I have heard from his lips.

His natural temper was rough, and he always claimed the right of speaking his mind, which often gave offence. His language was harsh, and his words bitter towards those who differed from him; and when those who lent him money without interest, requested payment, he has abused them, and withdrawn his friendship from them.

He indulged his opposition to particular persons in the pulpit, and used spiritual weapons against them in his own spirit. The same spirit perverted the meaning of authors in their writings, and led him to pass sentence against the innocent, and impute errors to his opponents which they abhorred.

By this conduct he sowed discord among brethren, occasioned divisions in churches, and removed ministers from their flocks by creating prejudice against them. In explaining scripture, he often substituted sound for sense; forced a text to speak *his* mind, rather than the mind of God; and was positive in cases extremely doubtful. His sermons and writings abound in self-contradiction, and all delivered and written with an air of infallibility. "Now I'll give you the mind of the Holy Ghost, the very bowels of the text," were his expressions. And although he exclaimed against commentators, he read them; and I have heard him detail good authors.

He was vain-glorious in conversation, in his sermons, and books. All related to *his* experience, *his* success, the confusion of *his* enemies, and the favour of God to *him*. Providence seemed chiefly concerned in all he did and said. Nor was he less vain of his singular experience as a standard.

And whilst thus exalting himself, he was very censorious against ministers, and their hearers. Those who flattered his vanity were busily employed in collecting reports of the errors of ministers, and their censures of him. He was credulous enough to believe all and imagine more. Most of his hearers imbibed his spirit; the worst part of his character: they could not hear other ministers; and even persons whose natural temper was amiable, became bitter and censorious, deciding on the state of others, and exalting his writings above the scriptures: this separated chief friends. I always thought if the charge of Antinomianism could be supported against him and his hearers, it was chiefly in reference to his spirit and temper. Rough as his temper was, he could go great lengths in flattery. I will not magnify either extreme; admit both were infirmities.

He certainly sowed discord among brethren; and generally left a church divided after his first visit. This is commended by his friends, as the division of "the precious from the vile;" but he often confounded characters.

Mr. H. was an absolute monarch in the church; members were received and expelled by him; the church had little or no power. I was assured by his best friends, that whilst he was absent at Bristol, the members were examined, and one hundred and twenty judged to be destitute of Christian experience. If any one extolled his ministry and censured others as legal, he became a favourite.

Collections and sacrament-money he received; this was not "of good report," and occasioned many censures.

He was equally censurable in making places of worship, built by public money, his own private property, instead of investing them in public trusts for the churches. He borrowed much money, without interest, for Providence Chapel, and kept the place as private property.

He had his excellences too. His natural powers were good, and he improved them by a diligent application to books, but never acknowledged his obligations to an author. His principal study was the book of God, of which his memory retained more than most men living. This part of his character was a public reproof to ministers, and gave him a superiority over them. To this he chiefly owed his popularity. In this he had no rival, because he had no equal. No subject occurred but he brought it to this test; and this qualified him to converse with tried souls. If opposing scripture to an opponent, he had no mercy, but quoted threaten-

ings against him. But when he had no imagined enemy to oppose, "his lips dropped fatness." I have often been edified, delighted, and astonished, by his copious illustrations of scripture and experience. "His ear was awakened morning after morning" to search "the word of wisdom;" and "he knew how to speak a word in season to him that was weary." He could confute error, and "stop the mouth of a gainsayer." "He was mighty in the scriptures."

ANECDOTES OF ANTINOMIANS.

The false hope of an Antinomian is supported by prosperity. Healthy in body, prosperous in business; *caressed*, because prosperous, and liberal,—because caressed, he flatters himself that he is the favourite of God and man. He puts his name down in the books of ministers, collecting to build new chapels. In different charities he is ostentatious: he lets his works SHINE BEFORE MEN, that they may honour *him*, instead of God. Flatter his pride, and you are sure of his money: but if he gives towards a collection at the door, he is sparing, because not distinguished from others. He is anxious to stand *first* in plans of liberality—to receive the honour of them, and exhibit the influence of his example.

Comparing himself with others who are spiritually-minded, but incapable of equalling him in liberality, he degrades them, as penurious, and proclaims his own pre-eminence. Palliating the sins of others like himself, as infirmities, he is severely censorious against the infirmities of those who are zealous for holiness.

As a zealous partisan, he will accommodate his sentiments, and his conduct, to the prevailing taste of the wealthy and the immoral. *Now* he is a *Dissenter* on *principle*. *Then* he is a *Churchman*, because he can escape the reach of discipline. But if his reputation can be promoted by becoming *moderate*, he is neither *Churchman* nor *Dissenter*, but votes for the Church prayers, and a succession of ministers, that he may be known as a man of power in the *committee*, and unknown in his real character. With him, indifference to personal holiness is *peace;* and he edeavours to keep a unity of spirit in the bond of *orthodoxy*, the bond of *indifference*, or the bond

of *iniquity*. Free from doubts and fears, he believes in *himself*, not in Christ; and believing in his own safety, against evidence to the contrary, is esteemed an heroic act of faith.

One of these characters, who never bridled his tongue, "but deceived his own heart," observed to me, that he had not been troubled with a doubt of the safety of his state for fifteen years. Yet this man was in the habit of lying, charging his bills twice, and putting articles into them which his customers had never received. He was daily at the public-house, railing against the best characters in the Church—"crucifying Christ afresh, and putting him to open shame." He delighted in railing against practical religion, to which his conduct and conversation proved him a stranger.

A second, who was intoxicated three or four times a week, was cruel to his wife, and neglected his children; was continually complaining that I did not preach *experimentally*; that is, I did not preach *his* experience, as consistent with the character of a christian.

A third left my ministry, as himself informed me, because he found *no encouragement to hope for mercy*. He lived in adultery with his wife's sister; and had read the Bible twice, from Genesis to Revelations, in search of some passage to countenance his conduct. His last words to me were, "The meeting is too hot for me, I cannot stand it."

A fourth left me, because when I preached against extortionate charges—the indulgence of pride, passion, lying, and misrepresentation, swearing and scandal—He said, I was *personal* in preaching.

A fifth complained that I was personal, because I remarked, that drinking to excess was worse in a woman than in a man;—charged me with *personality*, and added, "I am sure you meant me."

A sixth was offended when I preached against *covetousness*, and illustrated its fatal effects in the conduct of Judas: he was sure I aimed at him.

Private admonitions have been equally offensive to Antinomian professors.

It is painful to observe the artful methods adopted by such persons, to support the appearance of a religious character. However mean, selfish, and grinding their conduct to their tradesmen and dependents, they will purchase a name by occasional acts of liberality, by writing their names to a sum of money in the books of strange ministers, to be circulated from one congregation to another.

But to church discipline they are averse. This they call a *trammel*. "We have been held in trammels long enough," said one, who had been convicted of dishonesty and unchaste conduct. They cannot endure reproof, however gentle; nor restraint, however scriptural. They are advocates for managing the church by *committees*, if *they* be members of it; rather than for the power of the whole church, expressed by the votes of its members. Every exercise of power, in which they are not principals, they deem arbitrary, partial, and oppressive. They warmly recommend forgiveness of injuries against God and the church; but are the first to vote censures on better characters than their own; and the last to forgive an offence against themselves. If they are guilty, you must, like God, exercise mercy—bowels of mercy; but you must not like God, require repentance. When a poor member falls into sin, they unite with one consent to censure, or to expel him; but if a man of property offends, they are on the defensive; and cover his sin by excuses. They are often advocates for *order*, of which their pride and passions are the rule; but "the order of the Gospel," is too pure, too strict, and too humbling for their principles, temper, and conduct. You must accommodate their lusts, to ensure their friendship.

DEATH OF A POOR MAN.

On the 27th of July, I was sent for to visit Master S——, dangerously ill, at Bray Mill.

On this *only* visit I ever paid him—never before knowing where he lived,—I *first* mark—the kindness of his *master*, Mr. Lewis, who asked him, what he could do for him? "Send for my minister," said he. He did so; and I am thankful I went the same morning. It was now or never! for on Monday following he was no more in this world.

Secondly.—Under a diseased liver, which defied medicine, left him faint, trembling, with little breath, he said,—"Your presence always did me good, before I heard you on the Lord's-day. It does me good now. I have entered into rest. I am willing to die—I long to go. God has blessed your ministry to prepare me for this season. I have heard you with profit and pleasure, always. If not whilst hearing, the

truths have arisen in my memory and my heart, *afterwards*, and strengthened and comforted me. God bless you, and thank you."

Thirdly.—I think of myself. With such scenes—with such fruits of my ministry, ought I not to take the lead in all that is holy, spiritual, heavenly? Can I exceed—can I equal this attainment,—"I *have* entered into rest?"

Fourthly.—Why do I wonder at this in a poor, labouring, unlearned man? Has not Jesus said, "The poor are *evangelised?* Come to me and I will give you REST?" And has not his inspired apostle said, "They who have BELIEVED,—do enter into rest?"

Fifthly.—How admirable the *sympathy* of the Saviour! He anticipated the departing hour, and made him "ready." He *knew*, what was not apparent in his disease, that "his hour was come;" and, "as his day, so was his strength."

Sixthly.—How powerful is the fellowship of the saints! The death of William Armstrong had fired his zeal, enlivened his joy in Christ, brightened his prospects. He mentioned him to me, and glorified God in his triumph of faith.

Seventhly.—In the light of ETERNITY, he pitied the worldly man in his health, diligence, and prosperity; looking to the "things which are *seen* and temporal;" and not to the "things which are unseen and eternal!" But most of all, the cold, trifling, formal professor of religion, who rested short—of faith in Christ, and so "failed of," that is, "came short of the grace of God." I promised to visit him again on Monday,—had ordered the chaise—but heard—that "while thy servant was busy here and there—he was gone!"

ANECDOTE OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF MAIDENHEAD.

Mr. G. was mayor of the town of Maidenhead, not many years after Mr. Cooke settled in it. One sabbath evening, he attended the meeting-house, and heard Mr. Cooke preach. The text was, "*Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall behold him,*" &c. His attention was powerfully arrested; an arrow of conviction entered his heart; he became

speedily a changed man, and regularly attended the means of grace. He had been a jovial companion, a good singer, and a most gay and cheerful member of the corporation. The change was soon perceived. His brethren, at one of their social parties, rallied him upon his *Methodism*. But he stood firm by his principles, and said,—"Gentlemen, if you will listen patiently, I will tell you why I go to meeting, and do not attend your *card table*. I went one Sunday evening to hear Mr. Cooke. He took for his text—'*Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.*' YOUR EYE! shall see him." In short, he gave them so faithful and powerful an epitome of the sermon, and applied it so closely to them individually, marking the words—"*every eye shall see him,*"—with such emphasis, and pointing to them said, "*your* eye," and "*your* eye"—that they were satisfied with his reasons for going to meeting, and never again durst speak to him upon the subject.

This fact is intimately connected with another, to which, indeed, the conversion of the individual above referred to, soon after led. It may be entitled—

A MALICIOUS ENEMY BROUGHT TO CONFESSION.

Mr. ——, was a most violent and malicious enemy to Mr. Cooke, and all his dissenting neighbours. One sabbath afternoon, the gentleman alluded to in the preceding anecdote, was going to meeting, and happened to come up with this person. He invited him to Mr. Cooke's chapel. At first the malicious enemy scorned the proposal, and resolutely refused. Mr. G., then an alderman of the town, said, "why not? You really don't seem to know what to do with yourself, why not go?" He was at length constrained. He heard—the word was blessed—he became a warm, affectionate, steady friend to Mr. C., and the cause of Christ, till his death.

A few weeks after he had attended the chapel, he called to see Mr. Cooke—he said, he wished to see him alone. He commenced his address as follows:—"Sir, you have received from me some infamous anonymous letters. I cannot make reparation for the pain which they may have occasioned you, but I am come to confess that I was the writer, to beg your pardon, and to make the only restitution in my power

if you will tell me what the postage of them cost you. In my wicked madness of hatred to you, I had taken pains to put you to expense, by getting persons going to distant places, or by feeing coachmen, to put them into the post as far off as possible."

This confession, so honorable at once to the individual, and to the word of God, which had wrought the change, greatly affected and delighted Mr. Cooke. He thus saw the gospel frequently made, under his ministry, "the power of God unto salvation."

Having now supplied the reader with as full a detail of the incidents of Mr. Cooke's life, as seemed desirable for the purpose of embodying our recollections of the *man*, the *Christian*, and the *minister*, it only remains to complete the historical portion of this work, by an account of the closing scenes of the life of this great and eminent man. But before I do so it may be expected, that I should make some reference to an event which took place in the latter part of his ministry, and which is well known to have occasioned him much pain—not, indeed, on his own account; but on account of the public profession of Christianity. I refer to the separation of some individuals from the church and congregation, and the consequent origination of a society in the town of Maidenhead, now in the connexion of the Countess of Huntingdon.

As it regards this whole affair, nothing should have induced me to refer to it in any way, but a sense of duty, as the biographer of the deceased; and all I wish to put on record is, the occurrence of the fact in the year 1815, and the general opinion of the integrity, purity, and faithfulness of my friend. I wish to pass no censure upon the parties who opposed him in the exercise of church discipline. To their own Master—a righteous and just Master—I leave them. All I am concerned in, as his biographer, is to state my conviction, obtained from a diligent perusal of the documents relating to this affair, and the opinion of—I believe—all his ministerial brethren in the County Association, that whoever acted wrong, John Cooke, at least,

passed through the trial in a manner highly becoming the holy minister of Jesus Christ, and the faithful pastor of a Christian church. Hereafter it may appear that, in this, as well as in many other instances, the wrath of man has been made to praise God; and that the agitation and laceration of a Christian church have been the means of extending the cause of the Redeemer, and promoting the glory of his name. Then, though we cannot cease to regret the cause, we may be allowed to rejoice in its results.

From the period when our friend buried his last surviving daughter, which took place in the year 1822, he displayed an increasing spirituality of mind, and a pre-eminent devotedness to his sacred work. His thoughts seemed wholly detached from earthly things, and concentrated upon that heavenly work which now formed his only remaining care. His studies, his conversation, his very recreations, all had usefulness and heaven in view. He said about this period to one of his brethren, "I now seem as if I had nothing to attend to but my ministry. I am delivered from many interruptions and vexations which the connexions and affairs of my family brought upon me, and now my work is all in all." To another friend he observed, "I seem to have gathered all my family before me into my father's house; and it now only remains for me to follow them."

He realised and exhibited the spirit of this remark in a singular degree; for his work seemed uppermost in his thoughts; and, in season and out of season, he stood prepared to serve the great cause of the gospel wherever providence called him. The last year of his ministry was signally laborious and lively. His services were required in many neighbouring, and not a few distant, places. In the August preceding his death, he assisted at a public service at Worcester, on occasion of the settlement of the writer of this memoir. His conversation and preaching savoured much of heaven. Many who saw him, for the first time, were charmed and edified by his company; the Christian and the gentleman were sweetly blended; and while walking with the writer a whole morning, to survey whatever might be interesting to a stranger, he kept up a continued strain of interesting narrative and remark, full of piety and wisdom.

During this and the succeeding month, it was remarked that he seemed to be making a sort of apostolic circuit among his friends, as if to take a final farewell, and

leave a parting blessing. He was remarkably cheerful and interesting, although his deafness seemed to be increasing, and he was of course thereby deprived of a large measure of enjoyment from the society of his friends. He engaged in several settlements of pastors and ordinations of ministers. Indeed, through the months of August and September, his labours were more abundant than usual, and many of his friends remarked, that his conversation was signally interesting and edifying. He had resolved to lose no favourable opportunity of serving the cause of Christ, and feeling his time of labour drawing to a close, had expressed his determination to preach wherever he could, in consistency with the duties which demanded his attention at home.

The last sabbath but one allotted to him on earth, he spent at Reading, in the pulpit of his beloved and intimate friend and brother, the Rev. A. Douglas. This day is believed to have been one of great spiritual enjoyment to his own soul, and, it is hoped, was not without profit to his hearers. The same evening, after preaching thrice, he returned home, a distance of fourteen miles, for the purpose of attending the sick bed of an esteemed member of the church.

The sabbath immediately preceding his decease, he spent with his own flock. In the services of that memorable day, he displayed a full measure of physical and mental energy. There was no decline of feeling or of power—nothing to indicate that his race was run: all was ardent and vigorous, and many have been inclined since to remark, that like the sun, his setting radiance was most glorious. On the morning of that last sabbath, which his people wish never to forget, he discoursed from Matt. xiii. 18, on the parable of the sower. His manner was unusually impressive, and the tone of affectionate earnestness with which he cried "Hear! hear! hear! the parable of the sower," will not soon be forgotten.

His last testimony for Jesus and his gospel was delivered in the evening, from the 16th verse of the same chapter, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear." Some who had heard him preach his first sermon in Maidenhead, forty-three years before, enjoyed the privilege of listening to his final testimony. It was a season of peculiar refreshment to them and to many others: "they glorified the grace of God in him;" but distant indeed was the expectation, that they should see his face, and hear his voice in that pulpit no more. It was hidden from their thoughts and their fears,

how near their friend and prophet was to his celestial translation. They heard his parting testimony—saw him close the book of God—joined in his last supplications, and said *amen* to his final benediction; but minister and people were alike unconscious, that their union was dissolved, and that it only remained for both to meet the final account. Unforeseen and affecting as were the events which formed the sequel to this last religious service, many have thought that, had they been distinctly anticipated, they could hardly have heightened the impression of that last discourse: certain it is, that the premonition would not have disturbed the composure, or shaken the steadfastness of our friend's faith, nor have induced the slightest wish to unsay the great subject of his ministry, and of this his last address.

On the Tuesday immediately following, he was in the possession of his usual health, and went to High Wycombe, to meet his brethren of the County Association of Independent Ministers and Churches. They spent the day in the customary manner: the morning was devoted to a public service, and the afternoon to a free conversation upon a given subject. His brethren in the ministry had great pleasure in meeting him on this occasion. It was a farewell interview, and but a few days anticipative of the painful duty of attending him to the grave. On his return from this engagement, our friend caught cold in the face and head, and passed the night in much pain and uneasiness.

The following day was appointed for the funeral of an endeared friend and member of his church, Mrs. John Cooper. He was fully sensible of the danger he must incur by engaging in such a service, under the symptoms of cold with which his head was affected; and he would gladly have remained in the house. Although he never consulted his own convenience in the discharge of duty, yet he was free from the rashness and imprudence which some good and zealous men have evinced. He knew the worth of health, and he would not unnecessarily risk it. But in the present case, he could not have consulted his own welfare without disappointing the relatives of his departed friend, nor without depriving himself of an opportunity of bearing testimony to her christian excellence, and to the grace of God, in her joyful triumph over death. He accordingly went to the burial ground, committed the body of his friend to the tomb, and afterwards addressed the relatives and other

friends in the Meeting-house. At his special desire, the 18th Hymn, 1st Book, Dr. Watts,' was sung—

"Hear what the voice from heaven proclaims
For all the pious dead," &c. &c.

At the close of this service he said, "I shall improve the death of Mrs. Cooper next sabbath evening, *if spared.*"

He spoke no more in public. The improvement to the family of Mrs. C. and his friends at large, was to be his own removal—a sermon louder, more affecting, and, it may be hoped, not less successful with some, than the discourse he had premeditated, and intended to deliver on the ensuing Sabbath evening. A friend from High Wycombe, who had been present at the funeral, accompanied him to his house. He turned the conversation to the solemn service in which they had been engaged, and said, "Soon such a service may be required for one of us: but it will be *going home.*" "She cannot come to us, nor do we wish it, but we shall go to her." His friend added, "I am sorry I cannot be at Maidenhead next Lord's-day evening, to hear you preach the funeral sermon." "Well then," said he, "I will tell you something about it. If I am spared to improve the death of Mrs. Cooper, my text will be this, Phil. iii. 8, 'And be found in him.' I cannot find any passage that will suit better, for she preached to me from that text. Yes, when I visited her, several times her hand was put out, and the expression was, 'and be found in him—and be found in him.' She is with him, safely landed in his embrace." After a little pause, he said, "What fiery indignation will await those who are not found in him; fearful! fearful! fearful!—I intend to tell them so—and I shall say to them, recollect! recollect! recollect! while I am speaking it is penning—there is a record in heaven, and this record will stand for or against you. The books will be opened, of commendation and of condemnation—*God* will be your judge! Awful day for sinners—glorious day for saints! Saints will be found in Christ. Oh, what an office is the ministerial one, 'to watch for souls! We may lose opportunities of doing our Master's work, if we do not watch. How many of those I have been addressing many years will be at the right hand of God? Lord, thou knowest. I can think and look on many with pleasure, on others with grief, on none with indifference. No; a minister of Christ cannot be indifferent to the souls of men. 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; it is the power of God to salvation.'"

About eight o'clock in the evening, a violent and oppressive pain in the head came on. At this juncture, a friend called, who inquired particularly respecting the pain in his head. He said it was not one of the bilious head-aches, to which he had been subject, but he feared it was something worse—he thought the brain was affected. The medical attendant was immediately sent for. He advised Mr. C. to retire to bed. While undressing, he was seized with a violent fit, which deprived him of speech. He could hold no intercourse with his friends, and all he uttered from this moment was "*No*," when asked if he objected to a blister on his back. The blister was accordingly applied, and he soon after appeared to fall into a profound sleep. About two in the morning, he put forth his hand, to his old servant, and to several of his friends. He affectionately expressed by his grasp, farewell! then shook his head very significantly, and closed his eyes on the mournful scene. They were sealed by the heavy sleep which supervened, and which continued till about noon, when his spirit departed from the frail tabernacle of flesh.

His end was pre-eminently peaceful. He had finished his work, and his Master called him to receive his reward. The stroke was sudden, but it was not on that account to be regretted. He had been permitted recently to visit most of his christian friends, and to refresh the hearts of some of his most intimate friends in the ministry. Many of his private papers, as will be seen in the sequel, bear evidence that sudden death had been the subject of frequent anticipation, if not even of *desire*.

His remains were conveyed to the grave, on Thursday, the 26th of October, 1826, and laid in the same tomb which contained those of all his beloved family; and although localities are of no consideration in reference to the great resurrection of all the dead, yet it had doubtless often engaged the thoughts of our departed friend, that he should repose in the grave yard of his Meeting-house, beside the slumbering dust of his affectionate partner and beloved children.

On this affecting occasion, a sensation of public and general grief was felt, not only through the town and neighbourhood, but in the religious communities throughout the county, and in many distant places where his name and his labours were known. A vast concourse of sincere mourners followed, some their friend, and others their pastor, to the grave. Twenty of his brethren in the ministry attended to pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of the man whom each

counted a brother, and of whom many were ready to say, "My father! my father!" The Rev. W. Wilkins, of Abingdon, read suitable portions of the Sacred Scripture, and offered up prayer from the pulpit; the Rev. Alexander Redford, of Windsor, addressed the congregation and church in sentiments of affectionate condolence and Christian sympathy; the Rev. W. Judson, of High Wycombe, delivered an impressive oration at the grave; and the Rev. John Fryer, of Langley, concluded this most affecting service with solemn prayer at the tomb.

On the succeeding Lord's-day, the Rev. A. Douglas, of Reading, improved the event by a discourse in the morning, addressed to the church and congregation, from Hebrews xiii. 7, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." The Rev. John Griffin, of Portsea, addressed a large and deeply affected congregation in the afternoon, from Ephesians vi. 21, "A beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord." On both these occasions, the Meeting-house was crowded to excess, and many were obliged to retire, unable even to approach near to the entrances. A tribute to his worth when living was paid on this occasion, by multitudes collected from the town and neighbourhood, and by his Christian brethren who were able to be present, as well as by many in different, and some in distant places, who bore their public testimony to his excellence.

The tears of hundreds who wept over his grave, and the regrets of thousands who exclaimed, "a great man is fallen in Israel," throw a lustre around his memory, which would be degraded by comparison with escutcheoned nobility. It is a cold pageantry, and an ostentatious pomp with which kings are committed to the tomb. How much more illustrious, more truly and substantially, because morally, dignified, were the obsequies of this beloved minister of Christ. The fragrance of his good name, and the fruits of his usefulness to immortal souls, are more rationally desirable, than all the fame which philosophers ever won, and all the laurels which conquerors ever wore. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

The following is the inscription upon the tablet erected to the memory of Mr. Cooke, by the Church, over which he so long and so successfully presided.

IN MEMORY OF

THE REV. JOHN COOKE,

FORTY-THREE YEARS MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS PLACE,
WHO DIED OCTOBER 19, 1826, AGED 67.

HIS VARIED TALENTS AND HIS LIFE WERE CONSECRATED
TO GOD HIS SAVIOUR, AND EMPLOYED FOR THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

THE PEOPLE OF HIS CHARGE, FROM AN AFFECTION
MORE DURABLE THAN MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION,
HAVE ERECTED THIS TABLET,
TO EXPRESS THEIR GRATEFUL RECOLLECTION
OF HIS CHARACTER, HIS LABOURS, AND HIS SUCCESS.

Publications by Mr. Cooke.

1. Five Letters to a Friend, occasioned by the death of the Rev. W. B. Cadogan. 8vo. pp. 42. 1797.
2. A Sermon before the London Missionary Society. 1801.
3. Reflections on the Tendency of Plays, in a Letter to a Friend. 1797.
4. Reason Paying Homage to Revelation, in the Confession of a Deist at the Gates of Death, &c. 3d edit. 1820.
5. Celestial Glory dawning on the Young Christian at the Gate of Heaven; a Memorial of Mrs. M. Westbrook, &c. &c. 1820.
6. The Child's Monitor, or the Dying Experience of Mary Jones, &c. 2d edit. 1806.

CONCLUSION.

MR. COOKE was a man altogether *sui generis*—as unique in his aspect, and the general impression of his countenance and person, as in his character. His stature was tall, his person erect and graceful, and his frame masculine and well formed. There was an admirable agreement between the *man* and the *character*. His bodily frame wore the appearance of great firmness. It seemed to be the castle, and, at the same time, the personification of a spirit of high decision and vigour. There was an admirable adjustment of flesh and bone—enough of the latter to give his frame the character of strength and firmness, and enough of the former to prevent any disagreeable impression of sharp points and angles. Such a *mind* and such a *manner*, both in conversation and preaching, would neither have suited a *diminutive* nor a *slender* frame.

His countenance, however, was, by far, the most singular, and, at the same time, the most interesting part of his personal appearance. It may be said to have been composed of nature's least polished, yet by no means of her unsightliest materials. It was not at the first glance pleasing, yet it was impressive. It indicated *thought*, and *calm dignity*. Its general effect upon strangers was *fear;* but, as his voice gave welcome to a nearer approach and closer inspection, fear subsided into respect, and respect grew into esteem, and esteem ripened into affection. His countenance was susceptible of the most settled and penetrating expression of decision and uprightness. It wore a subduing sternness that made insincerity betray its secret, and immorality feel its weakness, while both seemed to crouch before him, under a sense of uneasiness and fear. His forehead, nose, and eye, were all singular—and either of them might have bespoke *a man without a fear;* but in their combination they might have represented *incorruptible integrity and decision*. His eye was capable of great expression. Though generally, and when quiescent, it was intellectual and penetrat-

ing; yet it after expressed strong affection, and when moved by tenderness, or illuminated into joy, it softened and mellowed the deep lines of his extraordinary forehead. It is, however, impossible to describe a countenance as peculiar as was the whole man. It may be said, that there was not a feature, and scarce a line in it which met a counterpart in any other mortal. It was a face which you could not have passed even casually, without feeling that it had a powerful fascination for your eye; but if you met the beam of *his* eye, it smote you with a sort of basilisk-power, that drew an involuntary homage, and made you say—"that's a character—and one of a rare class too." It was not necessary to hear John Cooke speak, to discover that he was no every-day-man.

His manners were pleasing and dignified. Persons of great independence of mind are frequently uncourteous; and great courage combined, as it generally is, with great integrity, too frequently generates a careless roughness of manner, which is not counteracted by studious habits. This defect is even more common among men of education than among men of the world. A sedentary life fosters the evil. But though there was a certain degree of bluntness, or more properly *unceremoniousness*, about our friend, yet I am not aware, that it ever degenerated into rudeness, or was incompatible with that christian politeness, which is in perfect accordance with sincerity. While his behaviour was, strictly speaking, *gentlemanly*, yet he was *frank*, and used, at times, "great plainness of speech." He was not studious of that politeness which consists in insincere professions—idle words—and flattery. Some men are officious with their friendship—*ultra* in their politeness, and would make every casual visitor who approached them believe, that he is a *most dear friend*. They seize you with both hands—protest that their joy is excessive at the sight of you—and leave you with emphatic expressions of their esteem. But they will treat the next acquaintance they meet in the same way. Perhaps you are scarce out of sight, or out of hearing, before you are out of their memory, or are recollected only to be slighted and slandered. This is the world's politeness, but though utterly inconsistent with christian sincerity and faithfulness, it is not abjured by all that rank high in the christian church. Our friend, Cooke, most felicitously exemplified the politeness of the christian gentleman, combined with the frankness and the fidelity of the true friend, who would rather risk the success of a reproof, than cherish a wound—or propagate a whisper.

His conversation was singularly fascinating. Without being either eloquent or loquacious, he had the invaluable art of winning and of fixing attention. Whatever he said was impressed with great force upon the listener. He was happily exempt from the vice of levity, into which those are apt to fall who have a large measure of the talent for conversation. Retailers of anecdotes almost unconsciously become triflers, and frequently put such a colouring upon *facts*, as turns them into *fictions*. Mr. Cooke told many anecdotes, sometimes too many in his discourses, but whether in conversation or in the pulpit, they were never told for mere mirth. There was a weight of moral sentiment, and an excellence of aim in all his narratives, which made his society as profitable as it was pleasing. He never sunk the character of the christian minister in the mere jovial companion; nor undid by levity in the parlour the effect he had produced in the pulpit. Neither was he disposed to spin out pointless tales; or dole out wonders by the hour, to keep the ear or the admiration of the company. His facts illustrated truths of the highest interest. Every thing tended to convince and enlighten the understanding, and to embody his own powerful conceptions of the importance and dignity of the doctrines, which he believed to be the "power of God to salvation." They were diagrams or pictures, by which the moral teacher made obvious to sense, what he wished to make palpable to the intellect, and powerful to the heart. Hence, by his conversation, he generally administered "grace unto the hearers." Mr. C. was eminently successful in the appropriateness of his anecdotes. They always *fitted*, and were told with *point*. Yet it cannot be said that he was ever *brilliant* in conversation. He dealt with facts and persons. He was never subtle, never witty; but he was always interesting, generally impressive, and to christian friends especially, edifying and animating to a high degree. His style was always unadorned, condensed and sententious. He looked at deeds as the true interpreters of men's hearts, and he, therefore, habituated himself to connect facts with principles, and to judge of all men by their fruits. Few men living, with so little imagination, and so much gravity; with so little propensity to humour or wit, and so great a love of mere matter of fact, ever made such deep impressions, or exerted so much fascination in company. It is difficult to state, precisely, in what this power consisted. I have sometimes imagined it to result, in a great degree, from the manly simplicity, force and brevity of his style; but, perhaps, it

owed still more to the weighty sentiments, and interesting truths, which were uppermost in his mind. Much, also, is doubtless to be ascribed to a *manner* all *emphasis, feeling*, and *reality*. He was always in earnest. He spoke to you in the parlour, like a man that had upon his tongue, something of great interest to *yourself*. There was, moreover, a dignified consciousness of power, which seemed to say *I will have attention:* and it acted like enchantment. When he opened his lips, all seemed disposed to listen. There was *command* in his very voice. When he spoke of men and the world—he spoke like one that had looked human nature through; and could take you into the interior of every character he described.

But who shall analyse *individuality*, and tell what it is that gives the character its peculiarity and its charm—its distinctive impression? We may name the ingredients thrown into a compound; but the *result* is a quality of itself, and is something that did not exist in any of the parts. There is a unity of impression and effect in every genuine character, which is, after all, but very inadequately explained by the most careful enumeration of all the distinct and peculiar qualities which it displays.

The mental faculties of Mr. Cooke, were naturally strong. Circumstances had imparted to them some special advantages. His mind had not enjoyed high culture in early life; nor had it subsequently undergone that discipline, which would have brought out all its strength. He had been mostly indebted for his attainments, in theological science, to his own persevering industry. Endowed with a more than ordinary portion of understanding and discrimination, he had gathered wisdom from passing events; and, by a propensity to frequent and laborious reflection, had obtained an eminence in spiritual knowledge and usefulness, attained by few who have even enjoyed the special advantages of an appropriate training.

Mr. Cooke resembled, both in the style of his preaching and in his personal character, *the admirable Cecil*. In the emphatic, condensed, and impressive manner of his sentences, he constantly reminded one of Cecil. His observations on living characters, and his use of facts and anecdotes, were generally in the style of that truly great man. Nor was he unlike him in his theological system, and in his clear and bold statement of the distinguishing doctrines of grace. Cecil, however, enjoyed one advantage which our friend lacked. His faculties had been well disciplined, and had received the polish and the vigour which classical and philo-

sophical studies generally impart to minds of great native vigour. Had our friend enjoyed such advantages, there is reason to believe he would have sunk in no point of comparison with the distinguished individual to whom I have compared him. He is well known to have been on terms of friendship with that eminent minister of Christ. He usually heard him during his visits to London, and Mr. Cecil frequently attended at Maidenhead, when he could make his journeys on the day of Mr. Cooke's lecturing. On one of these occasions he said, after hearing Mr. Cooke, as he passed out of the chapel, "I love a man of principle, whether in the Established Church or out of it. I don't like your *trimmers*." Cooke and Cecil were, indeed, men of like minds—they were kindred spirits—and, in many respects, were similar in their style and manner as preachers.

Mr. Cooke enjoyed through life a very considerable degree of popularity, which he was always willing to turn to a good account. His mode of preparation for the pulpit was, perhaps, the best that can be chosen for present impression, though not the best for the production of sermons of the most finished excellence and permanent fame. He wrote out a plan, which, to himself, formed a sort of map of the course of argument and illustration he intended to pursue. This plan was never long or full, but consisted mainly of catch-words, which, in his own mind, were connected with a train of thought previously arranged. His proofs and illustrations were mostly scriptural. He bottomed every proposition, every sentiment, upon Divine authority, and that in the most direct and simple manner, and with a dignity that seemed to say, "I deliver the holy oracle of Heaven"—"hear the word of the Lord."

An anecdote of himself, which his friends have heard him relate, and which he sometimes told to young ministers, will illustrate the assiduous and *thoughtful* manner in which he prepared his discourses. He used to relate the anecdote thus:—"Very soon after I was settled at Maidenhead, three texts struck me in succession, after the duties of the Sabbath were over. I said to myself, "Ah, *that* will do for next Lord's day *morning*; and *that* for the *afternoon*; and *that* for the *evening*." I was much engaged with preaching and visiting for several days, and not till Saturday did I sit down to arrange my matter for the Sabbath. The three texts were quite gone from me: all Saturday, till very late at night, I laboured to recover any one of them, but in vain. Sabbath

morning came, and I could think of nothing. Time of service drew on—and, in fact, I went to meeting, unable to fix my mind on *any* text. I went into the pulpit—they sang—I prayed—still as unable to say what I should preach from as any of my hearers. During the second singing I opened the Bible almost in despair: a passage struck me—I was carried through."

"On reaching my room, I threw myself on my knees, covered with shame and confusion. From that day I resolved *to "grind when the wind blew."* Since that time, whenever a text opens itself to my mind, I note it down; and I have, perhaps, hundreds of sketches I never used, and never may. Preaching I consider to be my special business; and having been enabled to keep this in view, every thing turns to sermons. Whether in company, travelling, walking, or the fields, or whatever incidents arise, I find all bring the word of God to my mind, and turn to some account in reference to my work."

He usually left the wording and filling up of his outline to the impression and feeling of the moment. It was in bringing out the force and beauty of scriptural sentiment that he chiefly excelled, while, in showing its application to all the varieties of human character, and all the vicissitudes of human life, he displayed an adroitness and skill, a simplicity of intention, and force of truth, which made him as acceptable to the educated as to the rustic hearer. He had no imagination, few metaphors, and little of what is called genius, yet there was a character of impressive originality about most of his discourses. Without paying any very scrupulous regard to mere words, or the form and beauty of sentences, he displayed the constituent principles of good taste—he followed nature—imitated no man—but always kept his aim simple and pure. He was more intent upon thoughts than expressions, and laboured rather to convey ideas to the understanding, than to awaken feeling and emotion. He rarely failed to make his hearers feel that he had an end in view far higher than their mere gratification. Sometimes he was touching and pathetic to a high degree; but this was not his common style—it was only when he was himself moved or excited by some affliction, or other stirring occurrence. The ordinary style of his preaching was rather intellectual and didactic: frequently argumentative, but mostly *expository*. It was in general a happy mixture of doctrine, practice, and experience; but in his latter years it partook rather more of experience, and was

replete with references to character and to fact. His appeals to the conscience were singularly powerful. The sentiments were usually most appropriate to the cases he treated, and they seemed to fall *in masses* on the soul of the listener—*every word told*. Sometimes he seemed to pause, as if labouring in the secret throes of another effort; then, after an interval of calm statement, or clear proof, his sentences fell again, with resistless weight, upon the understanding and the conscience.

I am not, however, to be understood as affirming that Mr. C. was always what I have described him. I am far from representing his pulpit exhibitions as faultless; or even as displaying the same unvarying excellence. From the very mode of sermonising which he adopted, his discourses very much depended upon his own state of feeling at the moment of delivery, and occasionally, his excess of brevity and emphasis, produced the very evils which he studied to avoid. These defects sometimes extended beyond individual sentences, and produced an obscurity as to his method, and the precise aim of his argument. Yet to say that he sometimes fell beneath himself, is only saying, that he was like all other preachers, *variable*, and like all other mortals, *imperfect*. That ordinarily he rose above most men in the excellence of his matter, and the depth of serious impression upon his hearers, will not be denied by his enemies, and that he sometimes failed of sustaining the full expectation of his hearers, will be conceded by his friends; and this is what candour and impartiality require me to state. Biography should not dwindle into indiscriminate eulogy. It loses some of its most important uses, if defects, as well as excellences, are not fairly stated. But whatever were the occasional defects of our friend in the construction, or the delivery of a discourse, the *strain* was always good—purely evangelical and useful. His views and principles were strictly orthodox, yet an admirable discretion accompanied his statements of doctrine, and a sound judgment guarded the comforts of the truth from the unhallowed usurpation of the licentious and the impenitent. He was no supralapsarian; no tacit apologist for the guilt of unbelief and impenitence, by teaching sinners, that because they *will not* perform spiritual duties, they may exempt their consciences from a sense of obligation; or that the *duty* to believe God depends upon their moral ability, or inability. He was no muzzled herald of the glad tidings, and proclaimed no truce to the impenitent sinner. That theological phar-

macy, by which some men have prepared and administered a poisonous compound, consisting of Mahometan fatalism, and arbitrary grace, adapted only to lull the consciences of the unconverted, and render more profound the sleep of death, which is upon them, was no art of his. He offered not the downy pillow of "WAIT, *till he gives you grace,*" to the arm-holes of a yet vigorous apostacy. He well knew how many have lived for years in sin, rebutting EVERY reproof, and every call, by saying, "we cannot give ourselves grace." He felt the *example* of Christ and his apostles, upon the duty of calling sinners to repentance, to be worth a thousand syllogisms devised by Antinomian ingenuity, and urged in the pride and sophistry of unsanctified reason. He esteemed it sufficient for his guidance, as a minister of the Gospel, to be authorized to preach the glad tidings, *indiscriminately*, to every creature: while he felt it no part of his duty to show the agreement of free agency in man, with sovereignty in God—nor, first to convince sinners that they possessed the power to obey, before he should venture to enforce their Creator's command. These, if difficulties they must be deemed, he suffered not to interfere with obvious precepts, but left for the great Arbiter of nature, and Author of grace, to explain, when he may see fit, or when human understandings are better prepared to perceive their agreement.

Our friend was peculiarly happy in most of his efforts upon these topics, of some of which it must be confessed, that they have embarrassed the understandings and the efforts of many eminent servants of Christ. Early in his ministry he had been called to canvas these questions; and he had done so with a spirit of fearless research; yet, with the coasting chart of Divine Revelation in his hand, he had tried the soundings, and touched the rocks, and knew the shoals and the sands where so many had struck, and where some had even made shipwreck of faith. But with a species of practical good sense; with a comprehensive inspection of human nature; with an implicit faith in the pilotage of revelation; he steered a steady and consistent course—maintained the sovereignty and grace of God, and hesitated not to invite, intreat, and command all men "every where to repent." Mr. C. had examined what human reason and metaphysical acuteness had effected upon these profound questions; he had thus fortified his own mind: still he treated none of these topics in the style of the ethical lecturer, but in that of the Christian teacher. He came forward to state the will

and the revelation of the Lord—not to vindicate the reason of that revelation, or to argue the right of that will. He might not be adapted to please the scholar or the philosopher, especially if their taste was turned rather to the pedantry of the schools, than to practical advantage; but he was sure to please the plain, strait forward, thinker—the man whose taste was formed rather to fact than theory—to utility rather than to ostentation. He was eminently successful on many occasions in removing difficulties connected with the doctrines of grace. Sometimes I have known him throw more light upon a difficulty by a single sentence, or by a question well put, than could be obtained by days of diligent research and reading. Without any of the pretension, and without displaying any of the apparatus, of the dialectician, he could avail himself of all his art, by a sort of natural tact, and give the very essence of a long and laboured argument with great force and simplicity, in few words.

As a preacher of the gospel, his success was eminent both in his own town, and in many other places. Few could altogether resist the manly wisdom and penetrating energy with which he spoke. His voice, his person, his words, his manner, his sentiments, all seemed signally made for one another; all had a character of obvious and commanding, I had almost said, *irresistible* strength, combined with flexibility; and sweetly harmonising into finished beauty; but it was the beauty of Herculean firmness of muscle, not that of roseate tints, or rounded limb, or glowing polish, or refined or delicate texture. Every element of his constitution, mental or corporeal, was MANLY; *strength* was the universal character. Body and mind were throughout *masculine*. There was nothing in aspect, in act, in speech, in feeling, emasculate or weak. His very meltings were masculine, and preserved the perfect consistency of self-possession and firmness. His tears rose and fell over an eye that still looked upwards, and watched for *the joy that cometh in the morning*.

The pre-eminent moral bias or ingredient of his character, was *integrity*—the pre-eminent feeling of his heart was *benevolence*—the pre-eminent grace of his renewed nature was *faith*. He always appeared to me to come the nearest to a personification of faith, of any minister I ever knew. I have known some all sanguine hope; I have seen others all melting love: but our friend was a man of unusual faith. He seemed to give a reality and a vividness to spiritual objects, which made you feel, with him, within the pre-

cincts of another world. He would converse of the being and perfections, and grace of God, till you felt yourself in an element of divine light, and seemed to recognise the nearness, the close consciousness, of the Divine Spirit surrounding you. In fact, he lived and conversed daily with "him who is invisible; and thence he drew that commanding power, that happy facility of discourse, by which he placed the listener as under the immediate observance of the all-searching eye. His discourses frequently exhibited this singular property in an extraordinary degree. He seemed like an individual, who, with his companions, was climbing a stupendous eminence, but who had got considerably above them, and appeared in the attitude at once of pointing out to them the heights still above, and of inviting them to follow. Every sermon sounded "to arms," and roused to courage, as by the voice of the trumpet. It sweetly fostered the hopes of the timid; while, to the steadfast Christian soldier, it confidently predicted and proclaimed, "*victory! victory!*"

He had the singular honour of being as useful in the conversion of sinners, as in the edification of saints. I have heard him say, that he did not know that he ever preached a funeral sermon in the whole course of his ministry, which was not blessed to the conversion of one or more souls. The anecdotes already detailed, will enable the reader to form some idea of the success which attended his labours, and show how signally his instructions were adapted to convince and impress. But the cases before related, are only a few out of many which, at different times, his friends have heard him recite, but which he never committed to paper, and which cannot be gathered up from that sibylline confusion into which their very multiplicity has thrown them.

The eminent success which attended his ministry, naturally suggests an inquiry into its probable causes. Was there any discernible connexion between that success and the instrument by which it was effected? Or is it to be ascribed solely to the sovereign blessing which divine grace imparted. That the sovereignty of that grace was illustrated in every case of such success, is, I apprehend, not to be doubted; and as little is it to be questioned, that under that grace, there was a pre-eminent fitness in the instrument to accomplish the effect.

I should comprise those peculiarities of our friend, which appear to have been connected with his success as a preacher, under three particulars. *First*, The mode which he had adopted, in exhibiting the truths of the gospel, was

that best adapted to meet the average understanding, and the spiritual exigencies of the people. It was a studious assimilation to the didactic manner of Christ and his apostles. He rarely occupied the attention of his hearers by arguments of a philosophical cast. I intend, however, no disrespect to that high but rare class of pulpit compositions that deserve such a distinctive denomination. Though the most elaborate efforts are not the agency usually blessed for the great purposes of conversion and edification, they have their uses, and those of a very high and important class. Our friend knew as well as any man how to estimate such efforts. But he dealt in the plainer, and, for the great ends of the gospel ministry, more efficient mode of simple and scriptural discussion. This style of handling gospel themes, if less elaborate, is not less satisfactory; and, in its results, fully justifies the preference which the most successful preachers have given to it. The conclusion to which two preachers of these opposite descriptions would lead their hearers, may be the same—the great principles of both identical, but the method of the one is more direct than that of the other. It is, moreover, better suited to the mass of mankind, who are more swayed by the instincts of their moral nature than by the coercive decisions of the judgment. If we analyse the conviction supposed to be attained in both cases, it will be found composed of a purer element, and to be in its own nature more complete, as well as more satisfactory in its results, in that case, in which faith is made to stand in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of man.

Mr. Cooke enjoyed intellectual and elaborate discourses. He knew how to prize them as auxiliaries to the revealing light of the Divine Spirit; he knew that there is a class of minds, and those always the most powerful, and the master ones in human society, with whom such efforts are often found introductory to an influence of a higher kind; and on whose account, therefore, they are of great price. But while he condemned not, and despised not the more systematic, eloquent, and logical preacher, neither did he emulate or imitate his efforts. Like David, he essayed not to go forth in the warrior's armour, not because he contemned it, but because it did *not fit him*; and he felt more at home with his shepherd's sling, and five smooth stones from the brook. "My chief concern," he says, in one of his private notes, "is for suitable truth, and to convey it from my heart in a clear and impressive manner. I leave word-preachers to achieve what wonders they can, by the

most graceful periods and style. I wish to preach so that *the common people may hear me gladly*. This was the mind of Christ. Some spend days in trimming a sermon, till some say it was a *fine* sermon. But however arranged, polished, and preached —if it be not *understood*, if it does not reach the conscience, warm the heart, and impel to the delightful discharge of our infinite and delightful obligations—it is 'as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' Lord! save me from trifling in my *studies*, trifling in my *preaching*, trifling with my *opportunities*, trifling with my own soul, and the souls of my hearers."

All history and all experience confirm the judgment which our friend had formed upon the efficiency of a scriptural mode of preaching. It may not ensure extensive popularity—it may not draw the men of philosophy, nor the men of taste to become our auditors—but it will assimilate us to Jesus Christ and his apostles, and will assuredly bring a richer reward in immortal souls. At the same time, I would neither undervalue a more elevated and argumentative style of preaching, than our friend adopted; nor would I hold it forth as a peculiar merit in him, that he did not adopt it. For I believe that preachers of the higher order are necessary in the church of Christ—that they are employed by the head of it, to keep at bay and check the pride of human intellect, and to command, when necessary, its reverence and its homage. Their uses are many and high; but I should be sorry to see any very material change in the numerical relations of the two classes; just for the same reasons as I should be alarmed to see any very large proportion of our corn fields and meadows turned into flower gardens or forests. Both have their beauty, and both their uses; but our safety consists in a well regulated proportion. The man who has never converted a soul by his ministry, may have rendered most important services to the church of Christ, and not lose his reward; services which could not have been rendered by the more directly useful preacher. There is the same distinction between these two classes of service, as between those which may be rendered in any human enterprise, by the head of one man, and by the hand of another. As God has set the members in the body, so has he set his ministers in the church. Let not the more intellectual and erudite despise the plainer and humbler labourer, by whom the great work of God and of salvation is carried on; and let not the plainer and more obviously successful labourer despise the more curious and rarer workman "in gold and silver and precious stones, and all manner of cun-

ning work;" for the completion of the spiritual sanctuary will require the one as well as the other.

A *second* impressive peculiarity of our friend was his style of thought, his diction, and delivery. He generally included, by way of argument, whatever was most approved; and, by way of illustration, whatever was most striking. But his language was signally fitted to his style of thinking. It was very plain, but very significant; yet never coarse, nor bordering on vulgarity. No long sentences, no long words; no learned terms, no superfluous epithets. Sometimes his laconisms betrayed him into obscurity; but, in general, they were singularly happy and emphatic. I have seen him produce more impression, more feeling, by one word, than some ministers by a whole sermon. By the repetition of a word well chosen, and expressive in a high degree, he has been known to produce a perfectly thrilling effect in a large assembly. In later years he became a very deliberate, sometimes a very slow, speaker. He made long pauses between his sentences. But then those sentences generally admitted of such pauses, because they made the hearer think and feel: they drove his thought back upon himself, instead of drawing it out in admiration of the preacher, or of his discourse. By long pauses, he sometimes excited and fixed attention.

There was one feature in his leisurely mode of address which was very advantageous to him. He betrayed under it, no inability or inaptitude. He awakened none of that painful suspense, sometimes excited by a slow speaker. Mr. C. generally inspired you with full confidence in his own ability to bring forth his ideas—and you felt as little distrust as impatience under his pauses, for they seemed the natural precursors of that mellowed and ripened state in which the fruit of his lips was, at length, presented to you. His personal appearance, in the pulpit, heightened greatly the impression of his matter. He was dignified—self-possessed, and calm in a very singular degree. Nothing could disturb him. Even when I have seen him—labouring under that mental confusion, which all ministers occasionally experience—he retained a firm nerve, and an unruffled tone.

His voice was deep and powerful. Never boisterous, inharmonious, or feeble. He managed it with great discretion and ability; so that when preaching in large places, and to immense crowds, it appeared no fatigue to him to preach. His closing sentences evinced no exhaustion. In general, they were delivered with as clear an intonation, and as full a body of voice as

the introduction. In the highest excitement of his feelings, and when addressing the largest congregations, he betrayed no symptoms of imbecility of tone, and lost no portion of his self-command. I ascribe this, in a great degree, to his natural courage, and to the attention which he is well known to have paid, in early life, to the management of his voice. Sometimes (especially in his later years) he dropped it too much to be well heard at the close of sentences; but then it did not appear to result from weakness, but from a disinclination to be unnecessarily loud: it was a practical mistake and not an error of judgment—and it arose from a growing deafness, by which he was disqualified to judge of the precise body of voice he had uttered, or of its ability to fill the place.

A *third* feature which I would just notice in the character of Mr. Cooke, as a preacher of the gospel, was the deep seriousness and impressive spirit of devotion which marked his discourses. His devotion was not of the impassioned, but of the sentimental character. His earnestness was not that of emotion, but of reason. He made the hearer rather *see* than *feel*; and his effort was more generally directed to convince and carry the judgment with him, than to excite the affections which might be captivated by pathos, before any rays of divine truth had penetrated the mind. A tone of the deepest seriousness pervaded all his public services. He never trifled, never amused, never dealt with anything less than subjects of eternal and infinite moment. The hearer felt, that matters of supreme interest weighed upon the preacher's mind, and that he was labouring with the firmest conviction of their infinite importance, to impress them upon every auditor.

But, connected with these features of his devotional feeling, I cannot forbear to notice the vigorous faith which he appeared to have in the efficiency of those means which he employed for the benefit of immortal souls. He seemed to speak with the persuasion I am now employing—an instrumentality which has been divinely appointed, which has effected the most memorable results, which connects with itself a spiritual virtue, essential to its success, but irresistible in its operation. This gave a firm tone, a strength of conviction, a vividness of manner, an inspiring sense of the presence of God, which kept up the aspect and the character of a Divine messenger. He spoke as one who, though he made no pretension to an inspired judgment, yet felt that Omnipotence was engaged on his side; and that in the day of the working of that mighty power, the most reluctant

would be made willing. This was, indeed, a very striking feature in our friend's character, one which, in this brief analysis, I could not overlook. Many must have observed it as well as myself; for it imparted a dignity and a composure to his mind, an energy and confidence to his statements of the truth, which assimilated him, in a very eminent degree, to the Apostolic men of other ages. I cannot but connect this fact with the success of his ministry: because I see in it something like a natural precursor of success:

"Possunt, quia posse videntur."

But chiefly because, I believe, there is a pre-eminent Divine sanction to the exercise of faith. The man that honours God, is honoured of God; and the minister that honours God, by preaching in the spirit, not only of Apostolic zeal and self-devotedness, but in the spirit of Apostolic *confidence in the Divine influence*—and of anticipating faith—shall reap that blessing in a richer abundance. The Apostle James, appears expressly to state the principle, when he said, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a waver of the sea—driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James, I. 6. 7.

It may not be deemed unsuitable or presumptuous to connect with the observations already made, a hint upon the deficiency of this spiritual feeling among us of the present day. The labours of the ministry are too little viewed in the light of a divine instrumentality—and though, in one sense, weak and contemptible as the rams' horns, with which Israel encompassed Jericho; yet it may become like those instruments, mighty in its very weakness, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." It does appear that there must be a strong and honourable confidence in the God of the gospel, and *in the gospel as of God*, ere it can be made effectual for the ends of its divine ordination. If it pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe—then it cannot be consistent with the supremacy of his glory, to lose sight of the dependence of the means of conversion upon his grace. It is necessary that the agents he employs should view their means exclusively in this light. Were this the prevailing feeling of the Christian ministry, there is little doubt but there would go forth with the word from the lips of the weakest of God's ministers, an influence and an unction which would give them the desire of their heart. Perhaps there is a tendency in cultivated minds, and

in ministers of eminent talents, to dwell, in thought, more upon the moral fitness of their labours—the force and the energy of human persuasion, than upon the single fact that all their sufficiency is of God. If we revert to the history of the church, we shall find that the scale of ministerial success would very nearly, if not perfectly, comport with the respective heights to which this principle has risen in the minds of ministers—or the degree in which faith, in a divine arrangement, has been in operation. But without attempting to decide this point, it must be conceded, that those ministers, who have cherished great faith in the preaching of the holy word, and who have gone to their work, not only in the strength of the Lord, but in the full anticipation of his blessing, have, in the issue, found themselves rewarded by a larger measure of success, than has attended the labours even of more gifted, and not less pious individuals.

This attempt to exhibit, somewhat in detail, those excellences of my friend, which appear to have been intimately connected with his eminent success, will not, I trust, be deemed unsuitable to the office of the biographer. I have, throughout, endeavoured to exhibit a faithful and impartial transcript of the man.

Such, both in private and public life, were the characteristical excellencies of Mr. Cooke, and such as we have before described—were the circumstances of his departure. If it is desirable that a minister's removal should be made subservient to the great end for which he has lived and laboured, and that his translation to his reward and rest should both accord with the tone, and deepen the effect, of his ministry, then, perhaps, in no conceivable way could this have been more signally accomplished, than by the manner in which it pleased God to remove our friend. It was in the full exercise of the eminent qualities he possessed, and at the very height of his usefulness, that he was suddenly prostrated by the stroke of death. There was here no lingering process of dissolution, no gradual debilitation of the faculties, no long abdication of the pulpit, impairing the recollection of the pastor by the intervention of strangers. Ever spiritual, and always sounding from house to house the note of preparation and of warning, in the full maturity of his powers, and in the mellowed exhibition of his graces,—after a Sabbath, of unusual fervour and devotion, he received that summons, from which there is no appeal—joyful to himself, but producing a sort of consternation among his numerous friends. The

review of that afflictive dispensation can now never be indul
in by his hearers, without a crowded recollection of
fidelity, vigour, diligence, and piety—that rare assemblag
excellences which distinguished him as a friend, a pas
and a Christian.

Thus the great head of the church, while removing
honoured servant to his reward, fixed the seal of perpetu
upon his virtues, and consulted the benefit of his berea
flock, by making the final impression of his character and
ministrations, the most sacred and the most complete. Her
his very all has become pregnant with good.

I have made an effort to embody, for the use of others
well as for his own friends, the recollections which are
fresh and stimulating in the minds of those who knew hi
and whatever may be thought of the delineation here p
sented, or whatever measure of attention it may seem
deserve from the rising ministry, there are none of those
has left behind, whether young or old, that may not de
instruction from his example, and encouragement from
success.

All who knew him, or who feel interested in the ske
here presented to the public, will at least join the writer
the importunate supplication, that his privileged people m
not soon forget *the man that had the rule over them, but f
low his faith, considering the end of his conversation* ;* t
that the emphatic description so judiciously applied to h
may be equally deserved by his esteemed successor, and
all who come after him in the Christian ministry—A
LOVED BROTHER AND FAITHFUL MINISTER IN T
LORD†.

* Heb. xiii. 7. The text of the Funeral Discourse, by the Rev.
Douglas. See page 123.

† The text of the Funeral Discourse, by the Rev. J. Griffin. See p.

SELECT REMAINS

OF

THE LATE REV. JOHN COOKE,

&c. &c.

SELECT REMAINS, &c.

No. 1.

ON DEATH.

NOTHING wears a more formidable appearance, to many persons, than *Death*. Several things which *precede*, others which *accompany*, and some which *follow* Death, enhance its awful importance. The philosopher said, "it is the most terrible of all terribles." But to the believer, *why* should it be so? For,

1. Christ has drawn out its *sting*. It is no *penal* evil to a Christian. It *cannot* hurt.

> "Burden'd and groaning then no more
> My rescu'd soul shall sing,
> As up the shining way I soar,
> Death! thou hast *lost* thy *sting*."

Perhaps it will be said, that many professed Christians die in self-delusion, awful insensibility, or in the tortures of despair.

It is granted; because many who profess faith in Christ, are Christians only in name, sentiment and profession; who are deists in heart and practice. "They profess that they know God; but in heart and works deny him."

I know professed Christians who live in adultery, fornication, or uncleanness.

Others who are dishonest extortioners.

A third class, who are habitual liars and slanderers.

A fourth class, who are habitually passionate, resentful and malignant.

A fifth class, who are proud of their knowledge, proud of their wealth, proud of their liberality, proud of their orthodoxy and proud of their religion.

They thirst for power, for office, for pre-eminence in religious societies: and to whom a faithful minister of the gospel, is considered as Elijah was to Ahab, "a troubler of Israel."

But these men know not "the grace of God in truth;" they are Christians in name, and deists in practice.

These professors of religion, whether in the established church, or in dissenting societies, are the WORST of deists.

Their conduct is the stumbling-block over which many fall into *avowed* deism; and affords the deist, in principle, a fatal excuse for his infidelity. But I am acquainted with "a peculiar people," who believe the truth of revelation, follow its counsels, obey its commands, imbibe its spirit, enjoy its consolations, triumph in death, and rejoice in the hope of a blessed immortality. For "the righteous hath hope in his death;" while the wicked is forced out of the world—DRIVEN AWAY—IN HIS WICKEDNESS."

He may produce arguments to prove that there is no hell; but he cannot conquer his own FEARS of hell, when death approaches. They endeavour to satisfy other persons that they are sincere and impartial in opposing *revealed truth*; but cannot *satisfy themselves*.

Whoever heard a Christian acknowledge in his last moments, he was sorry he was a Christian? What Christian, in that solemn season, does not wish he had believed the truth sooner and more heartily? What Christian does not cry, "Lord, increase my faith!"

And do not the fears, the desires of deists, in dying moments, form an awful contrast to the Christian's experience? Is not the spirit of their language, "let me die the death of the righteous?"

A deist, in health, may sneer at the Bible, laugh at those who believe it, use his talents to disprove it; but "in the bands of death he fears, trembles and despairs, and the fear of the wicked shall come upon him!"

2. Death is numbered with the Christian's blessings. "Death is *your's*." To the Christless *only* 'tis a curse. To the soul, interested in Christ, and such *only*, it is a *blessing*. "Blessed are the *dead* who die in the Lord." This is no human guess, but "the voice from *heaven*;" a voice from *heaven*, where their souls are at *rest*, said so. *They* do not return to tell us so; but it is *revealed* to us for our comfort. To the believer, death's nature is changed; it hides and shelters their bodies in the grave from disease and pain; and, by a stroke, strikes off the soul's fetters, and transmits it to heaven. Is this *death?* Let Jesus answer! "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall *never see* death." John viii. 51. "*Never see death?* No, surely! An *entire* separation from *all evil*, and an *instant* possession of heaven, in its "fullness of joy," cannot be *death*. The body, also, God "*hides* in the grave," Job xiii. 14, from all enemies, pains, and sicknesses, till the great rising day.

3. It is the *last* enemy: we have *many* enemies, *secret* and *avowed*, against body, name, property, soul, and peace. Should it terrify, nay, should it not transport us with eager wishes to meet with the *last* of them! Especially, when we are sure of a victory; for "death, the *last* enemy, shall be destroyed." Not merely *fought* with and *conquered*, but completely and eternally *destroyed*. The victory is *sure*, and also *complete*. Nor can he ever rally his forces and make a fresh attack; for not a *single trace* of his power shall

be left: no, the believer has the *victory*, yea, death will be "SWALLOWED UP" in victory.

4. You can die but *once*. The agonies of death, be they what they may, are to be felt but *once* by the disciple of Jesus. "It is *appointed* for men, in *general*, *once* to *die*." And to the *Christian* only *but* once. The hardened infidel, the proud self-righteous, and the mere professor, will find a "*second* death!" But the mind that applies to and rests on *Jesus*, dies but *once*, and "behold he is alive for evermore! Amen." All the hurt death can possibly do to a believer, "is to put it absolutely out of his own power ever to hurt him more." Then, (*gracious* God)! "let *me* die the death of the *righteous*; let my last end be like *his!*" Because, it is his privilege, and his *only*, at death, to enter a world where there is *no more* death." Rev. xxi. 4. Do happy angels fear death? No. Why not? Because they all know themselves to be confirmed in a state and bliss *immortal*. And of the saints it is said, "neither can they *die any more*; but are equal to the angels." Luke xx. 36.

5. The soul is immediately with Christ. No long-sleeping absence from Jesus, as some dreamingly say. No, much less a separation from the love of God. Nothing in *this world* can effect that; no, "not *death*, that separates the soul from the body," and *both* from the *dearest* earthly interest, "can separate the believer from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." "Christ's being with the soul in this life makes a heaven *here*, and the soul's being with Christ in a future life, makes a heaven there." His words to one of the dying thieves, therefore, were not merely, thou shall be in Paradise, but, "thou shalt be with me in Paradise." This is the heaven he promised his sorrowing followers; "I go to prepare a place for you." Death is only his coming *again*, "to receive you to himself." To be in Paradise is much; to be there with *Christ* is much more: but to be instantly there, *this day*—not another day—but *this* day—thy dying day—"shalt thou be with me in Paradise!" This is superlatively animating.

6. It is an *anxious* moment, and the *more* so, because no one knows a step of the way *beyond* it. This uncertainty is gloomy and painful to the thinking mind. But how cheering to reflect on our *convoy*. "And Lazarus died, and was *carried—borne away*, by the angels into Abraham's bosom." That is, to sit down with Abraham and to rejoice with him in heaven's fulness of joy! *Blissful* thought! to have my soul, when it leaves the body, to fall into the hands of such *mighty*, *wise*, and *benevolent* spirits, who rejoice at the *repentance* of a sinner—much more at his final perseverance and glorification: by them to be caught, and *borne away* from malignant devils, a polluting world and a cumbrous body, to the regions of wonder, joy and love! Precious Bible! that throws such light over the shades of death, to the departing Christian, through the ministry of angels.

"Lord, when I quit this mortal ground,
And thou shalt bid me rise and come;
Send a beloved angel down,
Safe to conduct *my* spirit home."

God, the God whom the believer serves, is able to deliver him out of thy hand, O death! such is the constancy of his love, the power of his arm, and the wisdom of his heart, that the soul that belongs to him knows a heaven in exclaiming, "*this* God is my God, for ever and ever, he will be my *guide*, even *over* and *beyond* death." Psalm xlviii. 14. No near relation, no affectionate friend, can accompany us through death, to assist, direct, or comfort the departing soul. They will want this assistance, direction, and comfort themselves. Well, "when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *thou (chief* shepherd) art with me." Psalm xxiii. 4.

7. The *time* and *circumstances* of your death are all *exactly settled*. Whatever occurences or disorder may prove the *means*, 'tis God who is the great *agent* to *use* that means; for "the *Lord* bringeth down to the grave." 1 Sam. ii. 6. We must not say, if I had not been attacked by *such* a disorder, or, had been so happy as to have sent for some *other* physician; or, if he had come *sooner*, my brother or friend had not died; for "there is an *appointed* time to man upon earth, his days are as the days of an *hireling*." Job vii. 1. The year, the *month* in that year, and the *week* in that month, in which thou art to die, are all *fixed*. Yea, the *day* in that week, the *hour* in that day, the *minute* in that hour, and the *moment* in that minute, in which thou art to close thine eyes and depart, is decreed. For your "days are *determined;* the number of our months (irresistible being)! are with thee. Thou hast appointed *man's* bounds, that he cannot *pass*." Job xiv. 5.

8. 'Tis the lot of the *wisest* and *best* of men. The favoured patriarchs, the honoured prophets, the gracious and useful apostles are dead. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, but Noah *died*. Abraham was the friend of God, but he died. "Moses, my servant, is dead." The first *good* man, that ever was *born*, went through this dark valley. Let this prove a consolation to thy soul in death, that it is not only "the way of all the earth" in general, but is the way of the *saints* too. If so, why should I wish to make an *exception*, seeing that "*wise* men die." Psalm xlix. 10. 'Tis the right way to the city of habitation. Art thou to *die*, believer? what then? It is the Lord's way of being "*merciful* to you, as he *used* to do, to those that love his name." Psalm cvi.

The *consequences* of death are so interesting, instant and durable, as to render death itself a *comforter* to the believer, endowed with proper views of it. Relative,

I. To his body. *Here*, sin spreads its painful effects into every member. It often pours dullness over the mind in those moments which we are most desirous of redeeming for God. Some member

is *lost*, or *tortured* by an unconquerable disorder. The faculties of the mind are often obscured, and its operations clogged by the body. Inordinate appetites agitate, defile, and afflict: but death parts the soul and body, and sin, that trying inmate, is not longer to prove "a law in our members, warring against the law of the mind." Death is a long farewell and endless adieu to the great train of natural and afflictive evils to the body.

II. Death is the moment when the believer launches *from the shores of "this present evil world."* The toils, the snares, the disappointments and vexations of *business*, are now *all over!* No longer shall thy affairs disturb thy rest, perplex thy thoughts, bury thee in care, exhaust thy spirit, nor obstruct thy way to God. No more shall the honours, profits, and pleasures of this world *allure*, nor the power of it *awe* thee into sin.

III. The *poor man*, if a *good* man, in the moment of his exit, departs from the pinches of present, or the painful fears of future, poverty. Through many a cold and trying winter, many a long and parching summer, with stiffened limbs and an aching heart, has he gone. His little or large family he has barely fed and clothed. Well, follow him in your thoughts; he, rich in faith, has entered the kingdom of which he was heir; and "he shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the *sun* light on him, nor any heat."

IV. The *Christian-member of some church* of Jesus, who has long witnessed in public, and mourned in secret, the love of many waxing cold—the house of God neglected—the treachery of some, the pride of others, the backbiting, quarrelling, and envy of many. Discord, confusion, and division in the church of the Prince of Peace, have often extorted David's wish, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I *fly away* and be at rest." The believer's *own* carnality, lukewarmness, and barrenness, under all his advantages from public ordinances, puts a heaviness into his heart, which makes it stoop. But in *death*, he leaves this imperfect society, he leaves his own unhallowed imperfections, and soars to a world of entire purity, perfection, and joy. Yonder he is, among the spirits of the just men made *perfect*, and an innumerable company of angels.

V. *Fallen angels* have been the trying adversaries of the dear Christian *here*. The shop, the street, the church, the closet, the bed, and the field, have witnessed the struggles, the tears, the prayers, and fears of the *tempted* soul. When thou hast soared in sweet meditation above the clouds of heaven, in a *moment*, in the twinkling of an eye, has Satan discharged a fiery dart at thee, and brought thy very state of friendship with God into question. *In prayer*, how has he disturbed, discouraged, confused, and distressed thee! In *trials*, how has he misinterpreted the Lord's designs! Now he *allures* thee by some deceiving bait; anon, he *terrifies* thee by the charges of past crimes! Now he tempts to *despair*; then,

to *presume!* There, he told thee thou hast done *nothing* for God, to *sink* thee; here, he tells thee thou hast done *enough*, to *lull* thee! One moment thou art the *very worst of sinners;* the next, thou art one of the best of saints. He sometimes says, thou hast no love to God, and as often suggests God has no love to thee. The Bible, he hints, is not true; or, if true, thou hast no part or lot in its promises —they belong to *others.* He reads over thy infirmities, says they are sure signs thou hast *no grace.* Oh, how does the conflicting soul groan in its tabernacle, being burdened with temptations: but *death* is the soul's passage to that world, to which no one dart of Satan can fly. "No lion shall be there!" Dear soldier, cheer up! For in death, God will *finally* and *completely* "bruise *Satan* under *thy feet.*" *Courage*, trembling soul, *courage!* for, through the Lord thy Saviour,

"*Thy* weak soul
Shall win the day,
Tho' *death* and *hell*
Obstruct the way."

No. II.

THE GOSPEL.

ALL understanding agents propose ends proportionable to the excellency of their capacity; the *means* also are fixed on, and should be equally admirable.

In redemption, God's supreme end is,

1. His own glory, Luke ii. 13, 14. This glory is displayed in different works, with a different lustre. Creation is his *handy* work, Ps. xix. 1; redemption excels it.

2. The subordinate end is man's complete happiness. How this could be done, no finite understanding could guess. Sin had shut up the channels of goodness, and opened a wide passage for just vengeance to fall on the creature. Man's crime was transcendant. Divine wisdom, an incomprehensible treasure of it, dwells in God. It was equal to the most admirable expedient. Redemption is a heap of wonders. Angels bend, with an extraordinary application of mind, to study the rich and unsearchable variety that is in it, 1 Pet. i. 12. It ravishes angelic minds to discern such a compass of wisdom. Heaven, that sanctuary of life and immortality, is the place where its wonders shall be more unravelled. Solemn veneration and ardent affection will attend the display. The displays of it are rich, various, and dazzling. Human wisdom, at its highest,

is but a spark, and that a borrowed one. Angelic wisdom might twinkle like a star: but divine wisdom, as it opens in redemption, bursts forth, with an insupportable glare, like the meridian sun. Angels adore it with covered faces.

The English word, from the Saxon, *a good message*, admirably expresses the force and propriety of the Greek, *εναγγελιον*.

1. Its *author* is God: from him it originally came. The smallest message from a *royal* personage claims the most respectful reception. Tidings from Him, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with a span! Who comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance! A Being, at whose feet worlds unnumbered revolve! whose understanding is infinite, whose arm is almighty, whose holiness is purer than light, whose justice is invariable, and whose truth is inviolable! A Being, whose wisdom has formed a plan involving man's highest happiness, and his own highest glory! A Being, whose frown shakes hell to the very centre, and whose smile pours unmixed joy through the spirits of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands in worlds of light! To say the Gospel is the message from *such* a Being, is a recommendation sufficient to challenge the most cordial reception, and justify the infliction of the severest vengeance on the soul that neglects it. God is a *happy* Being, and is therefore called "the *blessed* God." His happiness is underived; he has no one to thank for it. It is an *independent* blessedness. It is also full, infinite, and endless. It can receive no addition or diminution. So wise and powerful, he has nothing to fear; and infinitely self-sufficient, that he has nothing to hope for. This, *this* is the grand, the happy, the kind Author of the Gospel.

2. The nature and properties of the Gospel comes next to be considered. It is a constitution or message;

1. ENTIRELY GRACIOUS. However *great* its blessings, they are *free*. It supposes the creature *unworthy*. Its grand provision is not pay to man what he claims, as a debt; but to supply his *wants*. It supposes him *needy*, and makes provision; unworthy, and therefore that provision is *gracious*. "Without money and without price:" is its suitable language. Not, 'perform this term, or that condition first;' but, here are "spiritual blessings, in heavenly things in Christ;" 'take them freely, possess them fully, and enjoy them for ever.' Here, Jehovah passes by, and proclaims his name—"the Lord God *gracious* and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;' sins, beyond the capacity of an angel to number: vile in their quality, beyond an angel's conception; and aggravated beyond even the sin of devils. Yet the Gospel presents the broken-heart with a pardon, free, full, and for ever. "All manner of sin and blasphemy" it will shew a pardon for.

2. It is a *special* message. Millions and millions of rational

creatures come into the world, and never hear it. It never visits any place; but where God, its author, sends it.—Favoured England! "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent." God has passed by fallen angels. No good message has been sent to them. They are prisoners without hope. An earthly sovereign sends his messages where he pleases. It is a free act. And the Lord, sovereign of sovereigns, directs his gracious message where—when—in what manner—to what length of time, and to what ends he pleases. "It is according to the counsel of his own will."

3. It is a *wonderful* message. (1). Considering the *state* of those to whom it is sent. The human soul, in its fallen state, possesses a violent enmity to *God*, his *Law* and *Gospel*. Man has formed an alliance with devils, and joins them in their opposition to God and his government. Pride, self-sufficiency and unbelief, reign in his breast. His head, his heart, his tongue and practice, all proclaim him God's opponent. Does he expect to hear from God in this awful condition? If so, surely! it must be a message of wrath. But, however astonishing, even in this state, he receives a message, which discovers a condescension in infinite majesty, and a richness in infinite mercy, more than equal to the sinner's rebellion. "Lord, (as thou hast justly passed by angels!) what is *Man* that *thou* art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou so regardest him?" (2). In its *substance*, it is equally surprising. Jesus died! Jesus, who is rich in all the perfections of godhead. He, who made and supports the universe. He, whom angels revere, and devils dread. He, who has the winds in his fist, and waters in the hollow of his hand. He, to whom the vast nations of the world are less than nothing.—Marvellous expedient! *he* hied. He *died*. He was born! Born to yield an obedience to the violated law of God, for man. He died to atone for sin! Remove the curse! To conquer sin, death, and hell. To make way for every favor to flow to needy, ruined man. He brought in everlasting righteousness;—satisfied justice;—glorified divine truth;—and magnified the divine law. His life, every moment of it, was a life of sinless obedience. This imputed, gives man a title to heaven. Through his death, when believed in, all man's crimes are remitted. When we consider the divine excellences of Christ's person;—his amazing incarnation—spotless life—accursed death—his resurrection from the dead, as a proof of the acceptableness of his work—his triumphant ascension to the right hand of infinite majesty—his astonishing offices, grace, and capacities to discharge the former, and display the latter;—surely! it is a *wonderful message*, and may well be called "the *gospel of Christ*;" (Rom. i. 16). as he is its immediate author, and its substance. And in publishing Christ, born, living, dying, rising, ascending and reigning for *man*;—"Behold! we bring *him*—glad tidings."

4. It is a message of infallible *truth*. It is favoured and sent

by "God, that cannot lie." Jesus who brings it, is full of *truth*, as well as grace." It is attested by the mighty signs and wonders of the Spirit of truth.—Man need not fear any deception here.

5. A message becoming divine majesty. He had been insulted, and his law violated, by the sin of man. In Christ, he takes vengeance of sin. Here he appears *true* to his ancient threatening, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die!"—*Justice* also receives its highest demands, in the tremendous agonies of Jesus. Holiness appears, in that great and mysterious affair, to shun all fellowship with sin. Wisdom sparkles in such a plan, and majesty, in peerless grandeur, takes the rights of government. Mercy, in this way, pours forth her rich, various, numerous and endless blessings, so as to secure her dignity. Surely! we need not hesitate to say with Saint Paul, It is a *glorious* gospel! 2. Cor. iv. 4.

6. It is a message, equally *suitable* to man. Man is *spiritually dead*. This message is the instrument of imparting, sustaining, increasing, and completing spiritual life. It leads to Christ, who is our life. *Eternal* life it reveals, begins, and issues in. How justly called "*the Word of Life!*" This message is sent to creatures, *unrighteous*. It is the Spirit's means to convince the soul of its *need* of righteousness. It reveals and describes a divine, everlasting, righteousness of Jesus, as the *free gift* to faith: and is therefore called, "*the word of righteousness,*" to souls under the tyranny of devils—in the chains of sin—the power of the world and spiritual death—under the curse of the law, and liable, every breath, to the damnation of hell:—the message is sent to *such*, as "*the gospel of salvation.*" Eph. i. 13. In it, Jesus speaks, saying, "I came to save that which was *lost.*" A salvation spiritual, great, complete, everlasting and *free*!

It comes to man, with whom God is angry every day. Meets him full of enmity to God, and liable to vengeance. God is viewed as an enemy, and hated as such. This message brings tidings of a readiness in the divine breast, to forgive returning sinners. The spirit unfolds the excellences of divine mercy. Shows, to the fearful conscience, the *fullest* proof of God's readiness to forgive, in the death of Christ. Shows God, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not *imputing* their *trespasses* to them. This expels the vile affections from the heart, and wins the heart to God. This message, so brought home to the *soul*, compels the foe to drop his weapon, bend his knee, abhor himself, and forsake his sins. It breaks his heart, changes his pursuits, excites grateful amazement, and loosens his tongue to utter it. An honourable, happy, evident and endless *friendship* between God and the soul, commences. Therefore this message is called "the word of *reconciliation.*" This produces a peace of mind, "which passeth all understanding," and therefore the message bears the name of "*the gospel of peace.*"

Man's capacities are vast, and the existence of the soul, immortal. No *temporal* blessing, of whatever magnitude it may be, can fill it, in *this* world. The message sent to man, is called "the *everlasting* gospel." Rev. iv. 6. Because "it brings light and *immortality* to light," and publishes blessings as *durable* as the life of the soul. The *effects* of this message will *remain* on the mind when millions of ages are fled; yea, whilst immortality endures.—The gospel unveils a felicity to the believer, which he can never outlive.

7. It is God's second, and last message to man.

It is essentially different from the first, viz. the *Law*. The *Law* gives man "a rule of action," or, rather, is a rule of action to man. The Gospel points him to *Christ's* perfect obedience to that rule. The Law threatens the soul with an eternal curse, for the least failure: the Gospel promises pardon of the greatest crimes, and eternal life, as a free gift. The Law is a discovery of the justice, holiness, truth, and unchangeableness of God: the Gospel opens the charms of his rich grace and abundant mercy. The Law shows our disease and ruin: the Gospel our remedy. The Law breeds despair, excites enmity to God, by revealing his wrath against sin: the Gospel inspires lively hope. The Law says "sin abounds:" the Gospel cries "grace much more abounds." In life, death, and judgment, the Law says, "go ye cursed into everlasting fire!" the Gospel calls, "come ye blessed of my Father (to the believer), inherit the kingdom."

The Gospel was first delivered to our fallen parents, Adam and Eve, Gen. iii. 15. The view of Christ crucified in the bloody sacrifices, was the source of hope, life, and joy, to every believer, from Adam to Abraham. "God, foreseeing the justification of the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thy seed shall *all nations* be blessed." To preach blessedness in Christ, is preaching the gospel. The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles preached *one* gospel. Several editions and enlargements of this message were given; but *all* disclaimed salvation by works, in whole or in part. All held up to view, redemption by no other price than the blood of Christ—by no other arm than the power of Christ. Patriarchs, prophets, Christ and his apostles, all, in harmony, publish the guilt, pollution, weakness, desert, and misery of the *creature:* and to Jesus all bare witness, that there is salvation in him, and no other. For "this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," that "there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no *other gospel.* "If man or angel should preach any other, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 8.

8. It is the ministration of the Spirit. His efficacious influence attends it, to quicken the dead, enliven the dull; to enlighten the dark, purge the polluted, raise the dejected, guide the bewildered, and comfort the miserable. It comes in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5; Luke iv. 18.

No. III.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INFLUENCES.

THE necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence on the human mind, appears,

1. From our Lord's testimony, John xv. 5, "Without me ye can do nothing." All divine and saving operations, in any man, are from the Spirit of God. By him alone is the grace of Christ communicated to, and wrought in us. Separated from Christ, a man can do nothing; nor even in union with Christ, but as the Spirit's agency from Christ is afforded. The expressions of saints, throughout the Bible, indicate a consciousness of complete inability to do the least good, without divine assistance. And as to the ungodly, they are declared to be *without strength*, Rom. v. 6. Not, they have little, but *none*, to act spiritually and acceptably. The moral weakness of man is entire and constant.

2. No person can have any portion in, or benefit by Christ, without the Holy Spirit, Rom. viii. 9. Without this a man is in the flesh; that is, in a state of sin and death. Nothing can be plainer than this truth: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:" If not, you are yet in your sins. "For if *any* man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He has no union with Christ, no faith in Christ, no likeness to Christ, and no saving benefit by Christ. Whatever excellences Christ possesses—whatever he has done, suffered, or is doing, no man can partake of, or enjoy one blessing from him, or one moment's communion with him, but by the Spirit of God.

3. No man can be truly and profitably *acquainted* with Christ, without the Holy Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." We may learn the divinity of Christ from men and books, as the branch of any science. We may avow, explain, prove, enforce, and defend it; but no man can say, *knowing* what he says, that Jesus is Jehovah, but by the Holy Ghost. To *say* it is easy; but to believe it from the heart, that an infant, traced through youth up to manhood as a poor despised carpenter, who suffered, and *so* suffered, yea *died!* that this person was Jehovah! the Creator, sustainer, and judge of the world! None can say it *experimentally*, that Jesus is God, and practically treat him as such, but by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, it is equally impossible to know any spiritual things spiritually, without the spirit. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Cor. ii. 11. A man's own spirit is intimately acquainted with his own thoughts and counsels. So, 1 Cor. ii. 14, the *natural* man is set in opposition to him that is spiritual. He *receiveth* not the

things of the spirit of God. He refuses to accept them as excellent and necessary. Why? They are *foolishness!* Not in themselves, but *to him*—a system of nonsense. Neither *can* he, in that state, know them, because they are spiritually discerned. It follows, that a man, in his natural state, is totally incapable of knowing or receiving the doctrines of Christ, in any saving manner, without the Spirit of God, Matt. xvi. 16, 17. Darkness, error, and confusion, reign in every unrenewed mind. A few cold notions of Christ, and some customary ideas of truth and moral virtue, are like a body without a soul. Such a creature is blind to his dangers. He stands on the brink of a precipice and laughs. Flames surround him; but he is asleep. Devils, like lions, are before him, but he sees them not.

4. The impossibility of pleasing God, by any thing done or suffered, shows the necessity of the Holy Spirit. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." All are in the flesh, who are destitute of the Holy Spirit; "for ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—nothing but flesh. A carnal man thinks and acts carnally; he can do no otherwise. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, agreeable to the nature of the Holy Ghost. Every effect is consonant to its cause; ice does not burn us, nor does fire freeze. Whatever capacity, learning, sentiments, any natural man may possess; whatever apparent devotions towards God, and righteousness towards man, he may perform, he never can please God in any one thought or deed, in that state. And in that state he must be eternally, if destitute of the Spirit of God. He cannot alter his own state and taste; he *loves* his state; salvation from it he *abhors;* "for it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil." The carnal mind is *enmity* against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. Not only has it no *inclination* towards God, or desire after him; not only the carnal mind does not love, but it bears a strong and violent hatred to God; yea, it is *enmity* itself against him.

5. Man is spiritually dead: and,

> "Without his influence we should ever lie,
> Like bones, the prophets speaks of, dead and dry."

There is no true spiritual action in a natural man; no *pure* motion. Never, in that state, does he think what is good; comprehend what is good; love what is good; nor follow what is good. All true spiritual motion is ceased in the soul. Adam died (this death), the day he sinned. Gen. ii. 17.

> "Death was the sentence, death began,
> To take possession of the man."

In natural death, the soul is separated from the body; in spiritual death, the Holy Spirit is separate from the soul. When the soul is departed, the body is motionless; alienated from this life of God, man performs no one truly spiritual motion or act. He is dead, not

barely weak or sickly, or even partly dead, but dead really, *completely* dead.

The instability and *misery* of man, shows his need of the Holy Spirit's influence. Man is unstable in his views and sentiments. He may change his religion a thousand times, and his religion may not change him to purpose. He may be converted from a Pagan to a Mahometan; from a Papist to a Protestant; from a Churchman to a Dissenter; from Calvinism to Arminianism, and from Arminianism to Calvinism again; from Arminian to Arian; from Arian to Socinian; from Socinian to Moravian; from Moravian to Quaker; from a Quaker to a Deist; and from thence to an Atheist. Thus, poor fallen Adam, wanders from error to error; from error to truth, and from truth to error again; but without the Holy Spirit: through all his turns, his whole life is but one uninterrupted motion from God. Thus, unstable as water, man cannot excel. In all the travels of his mind, after happiness, he is disappointed and tired with the levity and fickleness of his own soul, but not tired *of* it. No sentiments or notions he possesses can remove his guilt, expel his corruption, conquer Satan, satisfy his conscience, succour him in trial, or comfort him in death. No view, even of the truths of God, without the Spirit of God, can do this. He flies from one created good to another, and is jaded in the pursuit, and vexed in the end. He meets no real satisfaction; he knows none but creature objects; and is without God. Every new object, because new, catches his mind: he vainly graps it, not for its real worth, but its novelty, which flies from him, by being possessed. From cistern to cistern, creature to creature, and thing to thing, he tries himself to prove, that miserable comforts are they all! His mind, like Cain, is a fugitive and vagabond on the earth.

"Toss'd to and fro, his passions fly
From vanity to vanity."

No. IV.

REMARKS ON PRAYER.

I OFTEN find the exercise of the gift of prayer, without the evident exercise of grace. Invention, memory, matter and method; without life, love, joy, or sorrow. Indeed, gifts are deceiving in this particular, for if we find ideas flow with ease, expressed with propriety and liberty, we may be pleased and charmed with our own performance; when, alas! it may prove a carnal joy in the exercise of a spiritual gift. This self-complacency is a dead calm. This joy is "a fool's paradise." The first temptation will show, that mere gifts

have rather strengthened than weakened corruption. The soul is not "alive unto God;" but to itself.

I have often exercised grace, without gifts. The spirit has been solemn; it has felt its necessities, and expressed them in fervent desires, deep groans, plain and earnest requests. In such moments, nothing but God, and its errand to the throne, engross the thoughts. The soul forgets language, method, and all mere circumstantials; and loses itself in approaching God. I have often rejected such prayers; because I have struggled with unbelief, my own sins and unworthiness. My thoughts have been broken, and my heart heavy. My whole soul seemed to go forth with a sentence, and then pause —lost in views of my own vileness, God's excellence, the imperfections of my prayers, and fears of not being heard. I have risen from my knees; cherished desponding thoughts; doubted of my conversion, and feared I possessed, nothing but resolutions of seeking God better *in future*. Alas! thought I, my religion seems for ever in *prospect*. It is always *future*. I am then ready to turn to the saints, and enquire of them, whether their souls ever felt and feared, rose and sunk, as mine did. And being little acquainted with Christian experience, I generally thought my own singular, and believed, if I met with the least saint, I was less a saint than he.

When both gifts and grace are in exercise, in prayer, it is pleasant to us, as well as acceptable to God:—the soul will be humbled and encouraged; reproved and excited. When I have found little comfort in prayer, I have found much after it: which teaches me that duty and happiness in this world, are *distinct* things, and *separable* things too, to a certain degree, although the contrary is often asserted. I do grant, and will contend, that duty and happiness are inseparable in the issues of things: but a creature may discharge a duty, in agony of body and mind, and receive a consequent happiness through it. This is, at once, to maintain the divine sovereignty, and encourage the creature, in submission to it.

At one time, the *length* of prayer was an object with me, which was occasioned by a legal spirit, cherished by legal preaching. The ministers would ask, "if you are not able to pray in your closet for an hour, or half an hour, how would you bear heaven?"— I was a "*novice*," and could not see through such legal sophistry; but I was a sincere novice, and therefore felt considerable distress, that my gift in prayer was so small, that I could not pray three minutes without repeating the lines, "Take my poor heart, &c." I have looked at my watch when my prayer has been finished, and found that I had prayed for ten or fifteen minutes; but feared I could not be a child of God, because I could not do as the ministers said, did, viz. pray for half an hour together. I have since known the pleasure and advantage of spreading my requests before God; for half an hour, and more: but millions of Christians may leave the world who never did.

It is the province of ministers to explain, illustrate, and enforce divine

law; but they arrogate when they *give* law. My own experience, in this, teaches me that young converts, being more ignorant than old ones, and equally sincere, should not be "made sad." A babe can neither reason, talk, walk, or work like a young man, or a father. Ministers err, when they set up their *present* and experienced views for a standard to young converts. They must look back, and compare the heart of a babe with a babe; one young man's experience with another; and one father with another. Otherwise, through "unskilfulness in the word of righteousness" and Satan's temptations, many will weep when they should be glad; and others presume when they should tremble. This is an error of many old Christians; they despise the broken language of a soul, whose views are obscure, whose gifts are small; but whose hearts are sincere in their attachment to Christ. Such forget that they, themselves, were once the "*lambs*" of Christ's flock. And ministers forget that Jesus hath said, "feed my lambs." Feed them; not starve and terrify them. Such a conduct is of evil tendency, as many young converts will judge that minister inaccessible, whose preaching is discouraging to the weak; and if the deacons and members of a church are of this spirit, what timid soul would venture to relate their experience to a people or minister who, they believe, would despise or reject it? Does not such a conduct keep many from the Lord's supper? A woman, some time since, requested the liberty of receiving the Lord's supper with the people to whom a certain minister was preaching; with a stern countenance, the good man looked at her and asked, What do you know about the Lord's supper? Let us hear what you have got to say for yourself? The woman being timid, trembled at his presence; and, through fear, was disabled from speaking.——"Go home, go home, good woman, and learn a little of the *design* of the Lord's supper, before you think of coming to me again." The woman returned, went to a friend, (a sensible friend of mine in town) and, in inexpressible concern, related her sad tale. "Fear not, said my friend, stay till such an evening, and good old Mr. **** will be there; go to him, *he* will not treat you so."—She accordingly went again, the minister of Jesus mildly addressed her; "well, good woman, so the Lord Jesus has done something for you—has he!?—Well, and how did the Lord bring salvation to your soul?" Encouraged by his aspect and address, she gave him her simple and satisfying narrative—was admitted to the table, and is a worthy communicant.

If *long* prayers are indiscriminately enforced, it tends to make the minister's character, as a preacher; to discourage some from prayer, and to lead the babes in Christ into bondage. In this instance they do not "magnify their *office*;" but degrade it. I used to judge of the acceptableness of my prayers by the joy I found in them; and by the ready expression of my thoughts. This I understood to mean, "liberty in prayer." If I found this, it was enough.

But since I have otherwise "learned Christ." I have observed many pray loud and long. They have had a ready expression, a variety of subjects, and went over them with a fervour which occasioned the most evident and plentiful perspiration. This has been called liberty, and a great gift. Here, cries one, is a clear head and a warm heart. But, sad to relate, I have observed, in the same persons, a liberty of being habitually dishonest, and of warming their hearts very often with "liquor in excess." Some have this liberty who are covetous, unjust, overbearing and censorious. But though such persons may have an ideal Christ, they are not united to "the Christ of God." But now I find my spiritual liberty, of believing in Jesus, and walking with God, to be independent of my gifts. And if I feel joy in my addresses to God, I am thankful; if not, I feel a satisfaction in the honour of having regarded the divine will, and of the acceptance of my requests, through Jesus. Here I leave my poor prayers, before the throne, in the hands of a mediator; through whom "the prayers of all saints," though not all the prayers of saints, are acceptable. If my prayers are imperfect, his are prevalent; if I am unworthy, "worthy is the Lamb!" I find, by experience, that when my prayers are short and frequent, I am most happy. A disposition to "continue instant in prayer," through the day, is a frame of mind, without which I am never at liberty.

Some things which I have least suspected have proved my greatest hindrances to prayer. And I am sure, whatever they are, they are worthy of serious consideration; and this is one method in which the heart discovers its *deceit*. With pleasure I have *resolved* I would pray, and broke my resolution by believing I could not. My *idea* of prayer always exceeds my *experience*, when actually engaged in it. This may be owing to our *thinking* with more ease than we *speak*. We are limited in *thought* to sensible images of spiritual things; but we often think more clearly than we *express* our thoughts, and yet judge of our prayers by our present *words*, rather than our former thoughts. Words often help me, by impressing my own thoughts upon my mind; but they often *hinder* me, by lowering my conceptions. I can never clearly express what I cannot clearly *think* of; but I often think of an object with clearness and pleasure, which I cannot so express. Besides, in imagining how pleasant and noble an act prayer must be, I am often deceived; for the idea in the mind is full, like a complete picture to the eye; but to give a full *description* of that picture by words, is not so easy. I sometimes realize myself, as in another world, to be prostrate before God, with eyes fixed, with hands joined, and pointed to the throne of God. Every feature speaks, and indicates a soul pouring forth its desires to God. The image in the mind is full, as a picture would strike the eye; but when I approach the throne, I am so unlike the being I had in my mind, that I am disheartened;

and seldom does my experience come up to my *idea* of communion with God.. Alas! when I compare my ideas of prayer, and when my aims in prayer are brought together, how far my experience comes short! As, when I look at a picture representing Samuel at prayer, I have a general idea of a soul all devotion; but I do not see represented those conflicts, fears, hopes, joys, dejection, and anxiety, which I *feel* in my own breast. The picture seems like the prayer of *innocence;* but mine are the prayers of a *sinner:*—a sinner who, in his devotions, finds variations of frame, like days in April. Now I seem to rise, and all is clear before my believing soul; then all is clouded. Now I am sure; then I doubt. One moment I am all earnestness, and the next I am more inclined to wish prayer over. Whence all this? From "sin that dwelleth in me." Ah! "when I would do good, *evil* is present with me:" it is always present, but not always so *manifest* and *operative* as then. Then we *discover* most of that evil which seemed dead, when we did not actually oppose it; but awaked, as from *sleep*, when vigorously opposed. To hear a minister speak highly of prayer, as an unutterable privilege, and to experience it so, are not both alike easy. We may think, hear, and speak of prayer, in a manner which may charm another, and lead them to suppose we pray as we speak of prayer. But, alas! to pray, what is it? To groan under a burden and sigh for deliverance. I desire and ask for mercy with an earnestness which no words can express, joined with grief that I cannot pray *more* earnestly. It is to *wrestle* with God! with faith, fervour, and agony—to wait upon God, and for him—to request and plead with hope and fear, joy and sorrow; weakness and strength; disappointment and success. But who can describe a soul in all its various emotions at the throne of grace? rising in joy, and melting in sorrow; enflamed in love and chilled in fear; filled with hope and dejected with disappointment? What pencil can draw, what pen can describe, what tongue can express, those "unutterable groans?" I assure you, reader, I remember the time, when feelings so complicated, in the solemn season of approaching God, has filled my mind with anxiety, lest my experience should be *singular* in this particular. And I once could not believe any other soul felt as I felt. But now, I view these sensations in a very different point of view; for I ask, shall I complain or rejoice in them? I will do both. But do all men feel thus. Did I *always* feel so? No, no, compassionate God! thou hast made me to differ. I do not forget that these groans and griefs, are the groans of a soul! a redeemed and renewed soul! And I doubt not, but that such breathings, however hindered and opposed, are as pleasing to God as the songs of angels! Is this mere fancy? Do I not presume? Am I not flattering myself? No! God declares, "I dwell also with him," &c. They are the fruit of God's Spirit, and recommended by a Saviour's blood, and a Saviour's pleas. I do not ask, can they

succeed? Can they miscarry? No! Jesus knows where he may find him and come, even to his seat! He orders my cause before Him, and fills his mouth with arguments. "He ever liveth to make intercession," and the Father heareth him always. Ask your own soul, my brother, whether you have not found more benefit after prayers, fervent and broken, than after those which have flowed with ease, and been followed with self-complacency? And no wonder; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the *heart*. We often reject, both in others and ourselves, what God approves; and approve even where God abhors. Our views, even of ourselves, our general characters and particular actions, are, in many instances, superficial and mistaken.

There is something noble in the efforts of a soul "glowing hard after God," through its own darkness, weakness, and sins. Against conscious unworthiness, and the suggestions of Satan. 'Tis a noble struggle! The prize is great, and the consequence of desisting truly degrading and painful. "What various hindrances," &c. Luke xviii., 1, "not faint." Faint! what should induce us to faint? Our sins and unworthiness? Then may all faint, and prayer be at an end; for who is sinless? who is worthy? are our feelings peculiar? How do we know this, unless we know the feelings of others in this case? And how can we know them, unless communicated? And this cannot be. Why? for the same reasons that some of *our* peculiar feelings are concealed from all mortals. As far as made known, they have a general agreement, which is a presumptive proof, that they agree in what lies hidden. Yes, "heart answers to heart," and our trials are such as are "common to man."

There are reasons why our prayers do not equal our prospects and wishes:—

1. Because Satan opposes the *resolution* to pray, less than *prayer* itself. And if he thinks the mere resolution will quiet conscience for the present, he will not oppose it at all; nay, perhaps, propose the resolution himself, that the soul may multiply its guilt in breaking it. But if the soul will actually pray; *then* he finds Satan proposing objects to *please* and *distract*; to divert the thoughts from God; or discourage us by suggesting, that our hearts are not sincere, our prayers not fervent, our faith not genuine, and our prayers useless. Or if we find freedom, which may arise from the state of body and mind, connected with a train of pleasing circumstances, he may fill us with proud conceit of our nearness to God, the excellency of our prayers, and proud contempt for the prayers of others which we excel.

2. Our own hearts do not discover their evil, till opposed; then sin becomes *active*. Like an army contemplating an easy march towards a place, and ample rewards, but find an active and strong resistance on approaching the place, which makes their *experience* differ from their *speculations*. Or like a lame man seated in his chair, enjoying a view of a fine garden, rises to walk towards it, and feels his *lameness*, which he forgets while sitting.

3. Satan may magnify the prospect of prayer, till our imagination realises a *heaven* of love, devotion and joy, the next time we pray. This he may do, that we may be discouraged by finding our experience so far below our expectations.

4. A believer's *aims* will always exceed his *attainments*, in this, and every other duty: and his conceptions of the *excellence* of a privilege, may far exceed his *enjoyment* of it. His enjoyment may exceed expression, and not equal his conceptions: for this reason, whatever he feels, he sees more before him, and cries out, "I have not attained! but I reach forth to the things that are *before!*" And as his knowledge and happiness grow, his aims are more enlarged, extensive, elevated, and strong, and strengthened. When I have forgot this distinction, I have thought I had no grace, because my exertions and attainments were not equal. My heart deceives me. I go to prayer, *wishing* to pray with *perfect* devotion, and am discouraged, that my prayer does not answer my wish. It is desirable, but not attainable.

5. Mistaking the *nature* of prayer. We think of perfect freedom of thought, perfect affection and just expression. Or the most unobstructed thought and propriety of words. Whereas, our thoughts may be confused, and words not at command.

6. A self-righteous spirit. We wish to present requests, which needed no *mediator* to recommend them. Prayers with a flow, such as must succeed from their own excellency. This spirit is opposite to, and opposed to the whole gospel. We see in our *sins* and our *hearts*, the need of a Saviour; but to see our need of the blood of a Saviour, in our *duties* too, and our very prayers! This is always mortifying to our pride, tears our beautiful robe, and leaves nothing to glory in, but "the Lord Jesus." If we are "brought nigh" to God, in our *condition* and *relation*, by the "blood of Christ;" do we think to draw nigh in sensible *communion* with God, *without* this blood? What can introduce us *now?* Our improved prayers? No, "we have an ADVOCATE," &c. Is *Christ* beloved of the Father? Are *his pleas* just? Does God accept them? Are we *sure* of this? And does the acceptance of a believer's prayers, stand and fall with Christ's intercession? Well then, till Christ forgets himself, or is forgotten by his Father;—till God becomes cold, and deaf to his pleas, I will "come boldly to the throne of grace, in this living way to the Father."

No. V.

ON MEDITATION.

THE operations of the human mind are remarkably variable and deceiving. One moment so miserable, that it fears it shall never be happy again; and the next so happy, that he shall never be miserable more. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought, as of ourselves." We may propose it, resolve it, attempt it; but in vain! The matter of our thought may be good, and the reason, manner, and end of it, not so. We often think of God's greatness and justice, with dread, without reverence; his mercy with hope, without life; his goodness, without gratitude; his truth, without faith; his promises, without prayer; his holiness, without imitation; his will, without obedience; and his providence, without resignation. But such thoughts are not "*good* ones." They are nearer akin to *forgetfulness* of God, than many are aware. I think upon a spiritual subject—my old thoughts on it occur, without the pleasure, affection, and efficacy. What makes this difference? I have the same object, reflections, desire, and advantages: yea, perhaps, before I had no designed meditation, and yet thought with advantage and pleasure; now I meditate with strong desire and fixed design, but think without either. Then my thoughts seemed settled in delightful contemplation; not only without difficulty, but it would have been difficult to think otherwise. Now I make many efforts, which only prove my present inability "to think a good thought;" and that my former "sufficiency was of God." When a divine sufficiency fills the soul, it thinks with attention and profit. The soul multiplies its thoughts—she dwells with pleasure, works with power, and elevates with rapture; or compose the soul into celestial tranquillity: but when our own insufficiency is to be felt, the thoughts are poor, barren, confined, cold, and powerless. At one season we can sing, "My heart is *fixed*, O God! my heart is fixed! I will sing and give praise." This flow of settled and grateful thoughts springs from a divine agency. At another time, against our aims, prayers, art, and labour, the thoughts shall be confused, wander against resolutions, and settle nowhere. God alone can "gird up the loins of the mind," and enable the believer to "serve the Lord without distraction."

We may exercise evil thoughts about good objects, and good thoughts about evil objects. "What is a good thought?" A good thought is, a thought, just in relation to the *object*, and suitable in relation to the manner and *end*. Suppose I think God is supremely

holy;—this thought is just in its object. But devils think so too. But if mine is a thought of approbation and delight, wishing to *resemble* God—this is good in its tendency. This glorifies God, and is becoming man. A believing thought of God's declaration, and admiring thought of his wisdom, an adoring thought of his supremacy, a humble thought of his greatness, a hopeful thought of his mercy, a grateful thought of his goodness, a reverential thought of his justice. The truth appears, 1. In meditation.—The soul often revolves some reflection of God, and can say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." But at another time, a soul meditates on the same reflection, and says, "I thought on God and was *troubled!*" Here creature insufficiency, and divine sufficiency, shine forth. Ah! how often has my meditation been intentionally good, and degenerated, in a short time, into trifling, folly, and sin!

If one good thought a heaven would buy,
Not one good thought, O Lord, have I.

If heavenly assistance attends me, "my meditation on him is sweet." If sin is the object of my thoughts, and heavenly influences bless me, I am ashamed and humbled. My esteem of Christ, my desires and prayers, multiply Left to myself, I think of it, partially, am unaffected, unhumbled, unprofited. Stupidity and unconcern attend my reflections. If the love of God is my object, and his spirit blows on my soul, I kindle into desire, affection, delight, and joyful praise. If not, I think till I doubt of my interest in it: and wonder if it can be that a heart so dull, can be the object of God's love, or the subject of love to God. If heaven is my theme, and heavenly power attends me, I am full of joy. "I mount, I fly! as on eagle's wings. I seem borne far above all that is vanity and vexation of spirit. I soar into the "third heavens," and hear the sound of heavenly hallelujahs—join the chorus of angels and saints in light, wonder at my past folly, think, and say, "It is good to be here." But if a divine agency is suspended, the motions of my soul about heaven itself, seem all natural. My understanding seems as dark as night, and my affections cold as frost. Turning my mind to the place of the damned, unaided by divine light and grace, I trifle while I range over brimstone and fire—weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. But should the sufficiency of God aid my soul, I see the smoke of their torments ascending up for ever and ever,—my heart swells with grateful sensations; and realising their misery, and my happiness and prospects through distinguishing grace, I cry "Hallelujah!" that I am ever delivered from their misery.

In Prayer—Sometime I feel my heart begins to warm and rise towards God—I long for some secret place. I realise the moment of solitude with pleasure. I think how earnestly I will pour out my sins, sorrows, and joys before God. The time comes—I enter my closet, prostrate my soul, begin; but how great my surprise and grief

to find all spiritual motion seems gone from my heart. My prayers are short, my words mere sounds. I sigh, groan, look up, hide my face in my hands in confusion and disappointment; rise discouraged, and cry, "Lord! what is man." Sometimes this has distressed my mind. I have been afraid, that all my delight in divine things, was a mere speculative pleasure. Such as a natural man might feel in contemplating any of God's works. Natural speculations on spiritual things will afford pleasure, to natural men, in proportion to the greatness and novelty of the objects, and their suitableness to their false views. I am like the captain of a ship, who finding a fair and strong wind rising at the desired quarter, makes hasty preparations for sailing, and finds an unexpected calm. This experience has its use. It teaches me what self-will remains in me. Why should I wish to confine all my choicest moments to the closet? "This divine wind blows where it listeth." If it visits me in the parlour, the field, the study, or the pulpit, let me eagerly welcome the divine gale, and be thankful, shunning whatever would interrupt his saving operations. How unbecoming a creature to say, "Lord, I had rather this visit had been felt in my closet. In every place, time, and manner, where, when, and how God shall think best, may my soul readily say,

Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,
Kindle a flame of sacred love,
In these cold hearts of ours.

The divine influence is free and uncontrollable. Yet I find, that sometimes he confines his agency to certain minds, and duties, and places. When I lived at Woburn, and had the care of the school from morning till evening upon me, I found, for near a whole summer, remarkable experience of divine condescension and grace. As regular as the evening came, the Spirit of the Lord came upon my mind in a powerful and gracious manner. And sometimes I have had such enlargement of soul in meditation and prayer; in the field, in the wood, the school, the bed, that sleep has left my eyes, till one in the morning. I have risen at four, gone boldly to the throne of grace, and found mercy.

There when his spirit touched my soul,
And graced her mean abode;
Oh! with what joy and life and love,
She conversed with her God.

If Woburn fields could speak, and you could hear them, they would teach you, "that night after night," conveyed knowledge of the love of God in Christ by the Spirit, to the meanest and unworthiest of souls, that ever dwelt in flesh. One moment I read, then prayed, then sung. "For while I was yet speaking, (compassionate God!) he said, here I am! and before I spoke the desires of my heart," he answered me. I thought, and "my meditation on him

was sweet, I was glad in the Lord;" but ye trees and clouds, angels, how often was it interrupted by joyful and grateful tears. I wondered, I wept, I confessed my sins, I asked myself, is it all reality? Am I deceived? Can it be? that my heart should be the mansion of that God, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, whose name is Holy! Satan witnessed and envied, but could not prevent my joys; for I was "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." It was then, "the joy of the Lord was my strength."

No. VI.

HINTS TO YOUNG MINISTERS.

Hint the First.

To a young minister, *many* parts of the Sacred Scriptures will appear obscure, the meaning of which, in a few years, will be opened to his mind. And although *some* such texts remain inexplicable, there are others, the right understanding of which, he considers intimately connected with his peace and usefulness. He consults the living,—reads the works of the dead,—meditates on the word itself, and is not satisfied. What shall he do?

Pray for *divine* teaching, relative to *such particular* portions of scripture. Mention them to the Lord, lamenting his darkness; trusting divine faithfulness; pleading his necessities as a minister; persevering in his applications.

The judgment is generally *settled*, after such a procedure. It may, perhaps, acquiesce in the sense some good man has given of it; but this he could not do, by his own unassisted reasoning. Or, he may obtain a view of it, which differs from his commentator.

The importance of this method appears in several things. The mind is generally *satisfied* in its apprehension of the truth; is much encouraged to implore divine teaching; and can with confidence recommend it to his hearers. Knowledge so obtained, is accompanied with a peculiar *savour*, or pleasure, and its influence is powerful and permanent.

The views of Scriptures which I have thus obtained, I have never s:

It is good to have "an unction from the Holy One," that we may "know all things."

Hint the Second.

IMPROVEABLE by a young minister, is an opportunity peculiarly favourable to study.

This may present itself to him, in such a place, and at such seasons, when he may be disposed to defer the consideration of the subject. A text occurs to the mind, with circumstances which establish, illustrate, or enforce it.

The pleasure it affords, determines him to pursue the subject at some future opportunity. Necessity alone will justify his neglect of the *present* advantage, It may be done by writing a few words in a pocket book, even in company, or on a journey. And should the light shine on the mind on Lord's-day evening, or Monday morning, it will be wise to follow it whilst it shines.

The importance of this is thus evident.

1. It *secures* the advantage of divine assistance. He is then like a mariner sailing the instant wind and tide are in his favour, although on some consideration he might wish to defer sailing. Should he lose the favourable opportunity, another may not soon occur. He must not only wait for the Lord, but *wait on him* also, whenever he presents himself to the soul, or gives an intimation of his mind on any subject.

Should the minister omit the improvement of such an occurrence, and refer it to a more convenient season, he may be like a miller preparing the sails of his mill, when the wind has ceased to blow. If he will not wait on the Lord, is it probable that the Lord will wait on him? No; his dispensations concur with his word, to promote in us a life of *dependence* on him.

2. A second advantage accruing from this respectful attention to divine aid, is, that it furnishes the minister with a variety of subjects for the pulpit; which if properly arranged, will be ready at his call, to finish them by study, and preach on them, as occasion demands.

3. It will reconcile his mind to a cross which he must bear,—that of studying for several days, and not being able to find a text dividing itself, or a subject which he can feel, so as to study it with pleasure, and prepare it for the pulpit. This he can bear, when he knows, that the last week he studied half a dozen sermons, by improving the assistance with which he was favoured; and that he is watching every season, desirous of making the most of it.

Hint the Third.

LET the young minister preach on that subject, which he feels at the present time, most impressive on his own spirit.

A temptation to depart from this occurs, when he has the

prospect of preaching on some peculiar occasion, for which he inclines to reserve the subject, in which he finds great pleasure. This subject requires attentive care.

1. Because those sermons which come from the heart of the preacher, generally reach the hearts of many hearers. "As face answers to face in the water, so the heart of man to man."

The parts of a sermon which are most interwoven with experience, are generally acceptable and profitable.

2. If we disregard this attention to our own frame of mind, we may be disappointed in expecting its return when we desire it. The subject may lose its savour. The manna was given for present use; that which was sinfully preserved, became useless and offensive.

Indeed it betrays great distrust of God, who can afford us truth, and the experience of truth, equal to our day.

Hint the Fourth.

YOUNG ministers are under strong temptations: when called to preach on special occasions—as funeral or fast sermons, to consult human authors in the first place, instead of the word of God.

This is productive of indolence, and when detected, exposes himself to contempt, as one who preaches the sermons which other ministers composed. It is often followed by disappointment; and after a man has read an author, he has obtained but few ideas, and little profit. On one occasion, I was called to preach a funeral sermon,—read Dr. Bates on death,—was charmed, but did not meet the assistance I expected. I immediately read the book of Job and Ecclesiastes, and found myself presently furnished. This incident has influenced me for more than twenty years, always to read, at least, those parts of Scripture, in which the subject is mentioned, before I read any human author; and look up to God to fix my thoughts, enlighten my knowledge, and impress my heart with truth.

No. VII.

EXCUSES FOR NEGLECTING PRAYER.

THERE is a principle prevailing in some Christians, which objects to the duty of praying, until they feel the influences of the Holy Spirit, qualifying for, and disposing them to the exercise.

The evil tendency of this principle is apparent. *First*, in the encouragement it gives to *slothfulness*. Witness the numerous meet-

ings of one class of professing Christians, who have frequent meetings for public worship, and never express a single prayer to God. Let *experience* speak, in those who have yielded to the temptation, whether they have not previously declined in the vigour of their graces, "restrained prayer before God," in its fervency and frequency, and then declined it so far as to excuse the omission of it. I once tried the experiment, and resolved to wait for the assistance of the Spirit of Grace, without asking for it: but I soon found sin and misery gaining on me. The charge, "be not slothful," roused me from my lethargy; and my feelings convinced me, that whomsoever the principle might suit, it was not adapted to promote my best interest.

It is asserted, by an eminent divine, that "prayer will make a man leave his sin; or sin will constrain him to cease from prayer." And numbers have confirmed the fact, that the neglect of prayer has strengthened sin, and paralized the soul in secret, domestic, and public prayer. The gift and grace of prayer have been diminished, other duties coldly performed and neglected;—the temper has been carnalized, the affections frozen; the conversation accommodated to worldly persons, and peace of mind has given way to lukewarmness and indifference. And often has such a mind become an easy captive to temptation,—been "drawn away and inticed" to open sin.

Secondly. The principle is *delusive*, as it leads the mind to expect the assistance of the Holy Spirit without *asking* for it. It makes the present feelings a law, instead of the will of God, which leads to enthusiasm. Such persons pretend to *wait* for the Spirit; but is not waiting without desire, graceless? Is it not indolent? Is it not hypocrisy? And if such waiters for the Spirit pretend to *desire* it, why not *express* the desire according to the command of God, that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint?"

If this "one thing be desired of the Lord," the resolution will be, "that will I seek after." While "they keep silent," will not "their bones "wax old?" Is not this prayerless frame "a transgression," which they should "confess to the Lord," with prayer, that he would "forgive the iniquity of their sin?" Would it not become them to pray, "Lord open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise?"

Thirdly. It gives force to Satan's temptations. Should the enemy of souls now suggest that prayer is unnecessary to him who knows what we need,—whose kindness requires no persuasion, whose purposes cannot be altered:—or that for such a sinner to pray is presumption;—or that a heart so indisposed by worldly business, distracted by family cares, oppressed by bodily weakness, is a sufficient excuse; will not such a mind readily "fall into temptation," and even seek relief in it? The want of utterance under the influence of hardness of heart, and the power of unbelief, must afford advantage to him against whose "wiles" we are exhorted to

be guarded by "all prayer." The above-mentioned evils are used by Satan to justify the neglect of prayer; well knowing, that the safety and comfort of the Christian are associated with obligations of duty,—"continue *instant* in prayer," that is, invincible, "praying always with all prayer and perseverance."

"Watch and PRAY,—that ye enter not into temptation."

Fourthly. The excuse for not praying, until divine influences indite the prayer, justifies the total neglect of it; for this cannot always be known. One supposes *freedom* in prayer is an evidence; but the vilest characters feel this with self complacency. They feel liberty in expressing their wishes to God.

A second fixes on a comfortable frame of mind, but this may arise from a favourable change in the nervous system, or any desirable event.

A third from the exercise of gifts with pleasure and acceptance; but this may prove no more than a ready utterance from a good memory, and freedom of speech.

A fourth from enthusiasm; as a speaker who, advising the hearers not to use the forms of the church, informed them, that the Spirit of God, who knew their mistake, had directed him to correct it; when they were all dissenters, and did not use the forms of the church.

Fifthly. The principle is discouraging,

To the young Christian, who has little experience or discernment. He may be led to neglect prayer, from the example of his elders.

To distressed believers; the tempted, the afflicted, and the backslider. Looking more to bad example than to the word of God, they may forget their duty. "Is any afflicted, let him pray." Call "on me in the day of trouble." "Take with you words."

And what must the minister do in a disconsolate frame? On this principle be struck dumb, because he does not feel the influences of the Spirit to warrant his prayer!

In a word,—when in health and prosperity, the person delivered from trouble may feel indisposed to prayer; and when in trouble cease to pray, because he despairs of deliverance, and thinks prayer useless, until he receives the gracious assistance of the Spirit without it.

No. VIII.

HOW MAY A CHRISTIAN ASCERTAIN THE DESIGN OF GOD IN HIS PROVIDENCE?

REVEALED truth is the Christian's rule of duty in *every* dispensation of Providence: and no action of God, abstracted from his word, can become the Christian's rule of action. Providence is not a new revelation of duty in *any* case; but the word of God is "the lamp to our feet and a light to our paths," in all possible circumstances. If in any situation, a question occurs, what course shall I take? The answer is that to which I am directed by the word of God. If I expect more than this, I am exposing myself to delusion, by looking for a new revelation. To ascertain the mind of God in some cases is an affair of considerable difficulty: that difficulty we must encounter. We must "*consider* our ways"—ponder the path of our feet—consult impartial friends—seek divine direction by prayer.

We ought to guard against the influence of whatsoever tends to mislead us; such as the advice of persons who may wish to gratify our inclinations or serve themselves. It is necessary to guard against the force of passions, prejudices, self-love, and a disposition to persuade ourselves contrary to clear conviction of duty.

We may be sure, in all cases, from the word of truth, that where pride and ambition, a supreme regard to worldly ease, honour or wealth, is the governing motive; it is from "the spirit of the world, and not the Spirit which is of God." "Try the spirits," *your own* spirit, in seeking counsel; that you wish to know the mind of God, and resolve to follow it, in opposition to the will of the flesh.

"Try the spirits" of *other persons* who may advise you, whether they be of God; and if they appear to advise from a regard to their own interest, reputation, or ease—from any sinful passion or bias—beware of being turned to the right hand or the left. A fickle spirit may induce us to think lightly of our present situation, and pride may suggest that we ought to seek a better one. And that which at first view appears a wrong step, may, by opposition to conviction and plausible reasoning, at last "seem right to a man." A restless mind may easily imagine that a new situation will, at least, relieve it from its present cross; but prudence will suggest the propriety of great caution in trusting the promises of persons whose friendship has not been tried, and of slighting the council of wise tried friends.

Hypocrisy will form a plan agreeably to a person's inclination, and then intreat God to bless him in the execution of it.

Move not too fast; "he that hasteth with his feet sinneth:" and shun unnecessary delay, where duty is plainly marked out.

Let no detached part of Scripture, no sudden impulse, no success or disappointment, form your rule of conduct: remembering, that God's word is no rule but in its pure meaning; that a sudden impulse may lead us right or wrong: that temporary success is sometimes God's curse on self-seeking; and disappointment in duty, designed to try, improve, and introduce the reward of faith. Some cases are plain; as when a Christian is *unwilling* to remove from one situation to another, and Providence renders his present situation uncomfortable to him, and points out another sphere of duty, unsought and unexpected, to which his safety, peace, and usefulness urge him; in this case it resembles the wind, which opens one door and shuts another.

The providence of God is very mysterious, and often presents to the Christian, difficulties which require much wisdom from above, to prevent his being "turned to the right hand or to the left." His concern is to ascertain the path of duty, by the best means he can use, and the strongest evidence he can obtain. This evidence must vary with circumstances. But, on the whole, the Christian is in general directed by a *combination* of incidents, rather than any single occurrence. He may, however, know his present duty by means; and after using all his light, and all the assistance he can obtain, he may not know three steps of his way; but he may have light sufficient to direct one step. Let him take that step and pause, unless he is directed with equal satisfaction to a second. If all is obscurity, he is not required to proceed on doubtful ground; let him stand still—patiently wait—watch the aspects of Providence—search the Scripture—review his experience and past observations on divine dispensations—especially cherish a *fear* of acting wrong, and a *concern* to approve himself to God, in dependence on his Spirit, and prayer for his guidance. This is a frame of mind which in itself tends to lead the Christian by a right way, and the decision he makes in this case, he may conclude a right one, for "the integrity of the upright shall direct his way." In proportion to his concern to know and follow the will of God, however trying to him, will be his warrant to conclude, that his determination is from God. A determination, the result of strong desire, to be and do right—by impartial inquiry, and fervent prayer, we may expect to be right. The mind thus acquires satisfaction after doubts and conflicts, and is settled in its purposes. This corresponds with the promises of God. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy *thoughts* shall be established," they shall be arranged and settled, and the mind composed and satisfied with its decisions.

Indeed, we have no reason to fear that God will permit a soul,

thus acting, to miss his way. This were to distrust his word of promise; "in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." In this case, if any man will do his will, the intimations of his providence he shall understand. "The meek," the teachable and submissive soul, will he guide in judgment; "the meek will he teach his way."

Follow present light. If a Christian has light sufficient to direct one step, let him take that step, he may then see his way to a second. Should all be doubtful, let him pause. If he cannot proceed, he must wait—stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. Such a state of mind is truly interesting: we may be invited different ways, and not hear the call of duty in either. Conscience may say, stand still, or you will hazard your character, your comfort and usefulness. Read the word—examine your heart—observe the hand of the Lord—implore direction. A soul in these circumstances, is a degree, resembles Israel following the cloud. When that was stationary, they pitched their tents and moved not till that moved. This conduct was not solely the effect of observation on the movement of the cloud, but of the council of God in his word, by Moses. If they ask, what are we to do when the cloud moves? The word answers, "follow it."—When it is stationary? Pitch your tent, and never move without it, nor continue in any place when the cloud leaves it. Thus, the Christian may hear the voice of God in his word, under some circumstances, commanding him to keep his station till he is warranted to leave it. Never to take a step on doubtful ground as an *experiment:* this is trifling with Providence, it is tempting the Lord, and entering into temptation ourselves.

Do not prescribe any signs or tokens, by which the will of God may be known. Some persons have tried this rule, and God has met them in their own way, by affording them their heart's desire and a strong delusion. Finding themselves disappointed, they have doubted the truth of Scripture and followed their own lusts.

Freedom in praying for any thing, is no rule of duty. Self-deceit and self-love, often induces a person to pray fervently and frequently for the accomplishment of his heart's desire; and when he opposes this inclination, he may feel no liberty in prayer. But the path of duty often appears that for which a person finds no inclination to pray.

If it appears clear from the word that I cannot keep my present situation without opposing my conscience, I ought to leave it. The word calls us, in such circumstances, to leave a place which we cannot keep without neglecting our duty, or committing sin. This is a first step, and must be taken even before another situation may be found.

If our present situation [illegible], and another presents itself, which demands our cons[illegible]llow present light. If you

doubt the lawfulness of moving, whilst you are lawfully occupied, and can, with an approving conscience, continue in your present circumstances, keep your place, or you are self-condemned. In this case, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. A state of suspense may be painful; but we must exercise patient self-denial, or make sinful haste.

Thirdly. To find out the will of God in different circumstances, we should seek a passive frame of mind; a mind that is entirely interested in doing only "that which is right in the sight of the Lord." This frees the mind from temptation; as, whatever presents itself, it is only anxious to know and do what is pleasing to God. This affords peace to the conscience, self-possession, and qualifies the mind to judge impartially, and affords it a rational ground to expect divine direction. The meekly submissive he "will guide in judgment, and teach his way." Psalm xxv. 9.

If the mind be not sincere, it will be unsettled; now yielding to one counsellor, then to another, whose advice is opposite; "for a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Fourthly. To discern the dictates of Providence, we should let our spiritual interests stand before our temporal; and make the latter subservient to the former. It is not only a present, but a permanent good to himself and to others, which regulates the judgment and heart of him who seeks *first* the kingdom of God. That which will promote his present and most lasting advantage, and qualify for the most permanent and extensive usefulness to others, should influence our minds in all cases.

When the mind is thus watchful, against false guides—follows present light—cultivates a passive frame—uses all the means of obtaining information—implores the direction of God, and watches for his hand; and, calm and settled, a decision succeeds perplexity and doubt; it may conclude, that such a decision is the dictate of God.

And this is agreeable to the divine word. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he (the Lord), shall choose." Ps. xxv. 12.

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Prov. xvi. 3.

"The integrity of the upright shall guide them." Prov. xi. 3.

"Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thy own understanding." "In all thy ways acknowledge him (by faith in his promise, submission to his will, prayer for his direction, and gratitude for his favour), and he shall direct thy paths."

One wrong step may, to some persons, appear trivial; but who can asure himself that the ruin of his character, peace, and usefulness, is not involved in that step? The possibility of consequences so serious, should awaken us to great circumspection and earnest

concern, that the Lord may guide us by his counsel till he receives us to glory.

Such an upright disposition and conduct, qualifies the mind to ask and receive counsel. Should a friend oppose the divine will from different views of the same dispensation, we may, perhaps, discern a degree of pride or covetousness, prejudice, rashness, or some selfish passion, which will convince us whilst we try his Spirit, that in this case it is not of God.

This disposition will also prevent a good man from wishing to advance his situation or worldly interest, at the hazard of his character, his peace, and his usefulness. He will not, like Ephraim, bring forth fruit to himself, by determining without asking counsel of God, and after leaning to his own understanding in forming his plan, beg of God to bless it.

Such integrity and circumspection will prevent the Christian from moving too fast. He ponders the path of his feet—asks counsel—suspects himself, and fears to oppose his inclination to the will of God. He guards against being misled by sudden impulses, detached scriptures, an instance of disappointment or success, impatience under a loss, or any wrong bias of mind from pride, fickleness and worldly affections in himself or others, who have some iufluence over him.

Integrity will produce consideration and vigilance, lead us to prefer suffering to sin, spiritual to temporal, and a permanent to transient good. It will make us self-suspicious, especially where our worldly interest is concerned, and our near relations urge us to act. It keeps us back from taking an unlawful step—hesitates at the beginning of an untried situation—goes not into the way of temptation—is bound fast by his engagements—allows the importance of counsel from impartial friends, who are most interested in our welfare. To such a soul the promise is verified; "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous," &c. Ps. xxxiv. 15.

No. IX.

ON DYING DAILY.

NOTHING is more evident, than that the *generality* of mortals care not how they *live*, which is an awful proof that they cannot bear to think that they shall *die*. Nay, to suggest an idea of *death*, is sufficient to incur the name of *saint* in *derision*, or of a melancholy

fool. Notwithstanding this, "there is a time to be *born*, and a time to *die*;" and a single moment beyond this *fixed* time, we "cannot pass." "Behold! (said God to his servant Moses), the day is come that thou must die!" From the sentence of God, and the daily *execution* of it, I am constrained to say to myself, "Behold! the days come (always coming!) that *thou* must die! And how do I know *what* day that will be? The day is as *uncertain* with me, as it is *certain* with God. What can I do in this solemn uncertainty? Surely, as I know not *which* day, my interest is to be ready *every* day. This was the conduct of one of the *wisest* and *best* of men, the Apostle Paul. Some might wonder at his mysterious conduct, of voluntary suffering for the Truth's sake, and might be ready to suggest, "you will expose yourself to sufferings till it will be your *death!*" What then? "Death is no formidable object to me," saith he; No! "I protest, by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, "I DIE DAILY!" Think not that I fear to expose myself to sufferings and death for Christ's sake; for, I assure you, the *cause* I am engaged in is so *noble*—the *Lord*, whose I am, and whom I serve, is so *dear* to me—and Death is so familiar and interesting in its consequences to me, that I die *daily*. Whatever I think to do in a *dying hour*, that I wish to do every day. I put myself in dying circumstances, and realise my departure, and try, *daily* try, to learn to die. That is,

First, "I DEPOSIT MY SOUL IN CHRIST'S HANDS DAILY." This is the very thing, I think, I shall do in *a dying moment*; this is a part of *dying work*. This, therefore, is *daily* work. Suppose, this hour, the agonies of death were upon me, I should cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Thus did Stephen, when he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at his right hand.

"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have COMMITTED to him against that day." This is his language. Lord Jesus, I have a soul liable to error and sin —exposed to the poison of the world, and the assaults of fallen spirits. This soul is immortal: if it is undone here, in my last hour, it is so for ever. I know not but this day, devils may be forming peculiar plans for my ruin; and, withal, it may prove my *dying* day. Whose arm but thine can shield and sustain me? My soul is my *all!* I dare not, therefore, trust it in any other hands than thine; in any other hands it cannot be safe; in thine it cannot but be so! I therefore seriously, humbly, and with confidence of its safety, "*commit*" it to thee, in believing and fervent prayer. Thus I begin this day, as I hope to act in my last day. This part of the Christian's daily work may receive a familiar illustration:—When my mother was within a few hours of eternity, she felt all the pangs of parental pity and concern agitating her breast! and expressed herself to this effect;—"I have two children, whom I dearly love. They are both young and helpless. Their father regards them not, Poor infants! What

become of them when I am gone? In whose hands shall I leave them? My dear sister, said she (who stood by her bed-side), will you give me your word, that you will take care of my little ones? You are near in blood; you love my children." "I will, my dear sister," she replied, "I will take care of them; make yourself easy, leave them with me." "Well," said my dying mother, "then I will *commit* them to your care. Now I am easy."—So says the Christian: I too must depart this life. My mortal body must return to dust. But I cannot part with life, comfortably or safely, until I have committed my immortal soul into safe hands. Jesus Christ is God over all, blessed for evermore. He can forgive the sins of my soul, and make it holy and happy. Lord Jesus, take charge of this immortal part! This dear jewel—my soul! He invites—he promises acceptance: I leave my soul in his hands. There it is deposited. Now I am easy. This is *dying*—a necessary, profitable, and pleasant duty! Who would not wish to die *daily*? "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth!" If this was revealed as my dying day, I should,

Secondly, "ATTEMPT TO RESIGN ALL THE INTERESTS OF EARTH." Death cannot be pleasant, so long as *strong attachment* to any mortal good reigns. What we *supremely love*, we never can consent to be separated from. Yet dying is a separation of the person from his nearest relatives! his dearest friends! his circle of acquaintance! his favourite business! his most pleasing plans and prospects of earthly felicity! This is part of our *daily* task. To turn our eyes away from those earthly objects which most engross our attention and affection—to withdraw our inordinate regard—to close our eyes on the world—utter the *hard*, the *parting* word, "farewell!" Rise in the morning, Christian, and thus die! Ye husbands and wives, parents, children, friends, I think I see you entering your closets, shutting your door, and on your knees, giving up each other, in the wisest resignation, to the Supreme will. Here, Lord, says an affectionate husband, father, friend, I know I must one day, leave my wife and companion, and children. I desire to realize and inure myself to the work, before the time comes. I give up the partner of my joys and sorrows, my dear offspring! beloved friends and relatives, I this morning resign my worldly affairs as a dying creature. "My times are in *thy* hands!" I know not the hour when the Son of Man cometh. When the time of my departure is at hand, I desire to have nothing to do but to exclaim, in the language of the happy Apostle, "I am ready to be offered!" O! pleasant meeting between Death and such a Christian! Death is come, and I am *ready!* The other week I made an appointment to go and see a certain dear friend. An intimate acquaintance was to call for me. He did so. No sooner did I see him, but I cried, "I am ready!" May this be the case when *death* gives me a call! And what can tend to promote this readiness more than dying daily?

This act of offering should be *daily*! If we do not, we shall find our earthly ties *increase* and *strengthen*. Ah! deceitful world! I'll rise in the morning, and this shall be my first lesson in the day, to *die!* Thus will I sing,

Now I forbid my carnal hope,
My fond desires recal;
I give my mortal interest up,
And make my *God* my all.

Pressing trials I may meet. Difficult duties may call for uncommon exertions—friends may slight and forsake me—enemies may grow more enraged, and temptations more strong—persecution may attempt to affright, and poverty may threaten to crush me—health may give place to sickness, and the dearest relatives bid adieu to the world! What then? "None of these things move me, nor count I my *life* dear to me, so that I may finish my course with joy." Godly friends depart; but dying daily is resigning them, and realizing the moment of *following* them!—I daily meet with trials: but I die daily; and that is a realization of the desired *period* of *all* trials. I will "take no anxious thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof." I now intend to live by the day; I am altogether uncertain of the morrow. Perhaps to-morrow I may be in heaven! I know not, however, to the contrary. Nay, I will not stay presuming on the morrow, but calmly resign all *now*; for even "*this day*, Lord Jesus! I may be with thee in paradise." "I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily"—to *sin*; does sin affect a dead man? Is a dead man affected by sin? "How shall I, who am dead to sin, live *any longer* therein?" to *natural attainments*; to *moral self*; or all my works of holiness; to *relative self*; and to the world. The praise of friends *elates*, and the censure of enemies *depresses* me; I would daily *die* to both. In the phrase of "dying daily," there is included,

Thirdly. "*The cultivation of a daily* SUPERIOR *regard to another world.*" A believer has to do with two worlds—heaven and earth. His abode on earth must be *short*, and, at the same time, he knows not *how* short. This *uncertainty* he wisely improves, to *wean* his heart from the place where he is not sure of living a year, a month, a week, a day, an hour, or even a *minute!* In this *just* view of his *time-state*, is it possible that he should exclaim with Peter, "let me build a tabernacle here?" No, surely! He rather takes the words of the wise, and urges his soul to "arise, and depart, seeing this, is not his *rest!*" The nature of the *present* state compels him to utter the wise man's repeated text, with a considerable emotion of mind—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit!" The *rich*, the *gay*, and the *vain*, he perceives and pities, in their delusion. He hears them whisper, "soul, thou hast goods laid up for many *years*." And he can hardly forbear to exclaim, "Thou fool!—*this*

night thy soul shall be *required* of thee!" He sees all ages and ranks, quitting this world! He knows "they carry *nothing* away, in their hands, with them." He perceives the painful reluctance, with which they leave all mortal good, and learns to moderate his esteem of those things, from which he may be rent the next breath he draws? From which he may be *rent*, did I say? Rather, from which, "he desires to *depart*, and be with CHRIST, which is *far better*." He has learned from those inspired testimonies, which are his counsellors, that the glorious world towards which he aspires, has joys, has honours, which never fade. He looks towards that *happy* world, and sees "His God, the Judge of all! *Jesus*, the Mediator of the new covenant! The spirits of just men made perfect, and an innumerable company of angels." He realises "a number that no man can number," harping with their harps!" This world of light and love, holiness and bliss, draws his best esteem and affections, and by faith in the world above, he triumphs over this PRESENT evil world. Hear this good soul, as he rises from his early prayer:

This world's a *dream*, an empty shew;
But the bright world, to which I go,
Hath joys *substantial* and *sincere*;
When shall I wake and find me there.

This, this, is dying daily! Go on, my dear Christian! go on—— Daily lose sight of things *temporal*, by the overpowering sense of things eternal!" As for the honours, riches, and pleasures of earth, —take them, ye earthly minded! But

What sinners value, I resign;
Lord, 'tis enough, that *thou* art mine!

O my God! help me this day, to weigh anchor from these mortal shores, and *die*, to all, but *Thee!*

But a FOURTH particular, enters into the meaning of the apostle, namely,

A pleasing realization of death, as a MEANS *of attaining the utmost of our wishes.*

Death in *itself*, is by no means to be viewed as a *blessing*. It is, in itself, a *penal evil*. "*Sin* entered into the world, and death by *sin*." Death, therefore, is styled our *enemy*. It separates us from all we love on earth. It tears the soul from the body, to which it is united by one of the closest of unions. It often pulls down this frail tabernacle, with a gradual hand, and makes us suffer (compared with others), twenty deaths in one! Can death, then, be *desirable*? Not for *itself*, surely; but as a means to a *noble* end. As a *rough* and *painful* way, to the end of all my wishes; and though *rough*, it is a *short* way. Before I am aware, I shall cease from all toil—be delivered from *all pain*—and gain the summit of joy. Ah! who would not *willingly die*, to arrive—

Where I shall *see*, and *hear*, and *know*,
All I desired, or wish below;
Where every power finds sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy.

In this view, the apostle said to the Corinthians, "*Death* is yours." And thus to view it daily, is to *die daily*. In this noble and arduous work, I have reason to cry, "Lord, *help* me!"

Death must be viewed as an eternal adieu to error and mistake, to pollution and guilt, and every imperfection of a regenerate soul. It is a final separation from all personal, social, and public woe; from all the fears, pains, doubts, and languors, of the Christian's warfare; from all afflictions from God; temptations from Satan; trials from the world, and evils of the heart. Death introduces us into all the knowledge, holiness, honour and felicity of heaven. Shall I, then, *shrink* from it? Lord help me to spring forward to meet it as the joyful porch into immortal joys! So to do, is to *die daily*, indeed! Complete blessedness then will meet you, O ye of little faith; "for *blessed* are the dead who die in the Lord." They enter into rest. "To die is gain." O, realize this blessedness every morning, every day, dear Christian, and then, dying will not seem to you "as if some *strange* thing had happened to you."

This important duty includes in the

Fifth place. *A daily regard to the* STATE *and* FRAME *of the soul.* 1st. The *state* of the soul. Am I a Christian *indeed?* will often occur to the soul. He will examine, as a *dying* man, into the evidences of his regeneration. As in the view of death he will inquire into the *judgment* and supreme *attachments* of the soul. Its desires, and prime pursuits, will be scrutinized; the man will deal *impartially* in this duty, for he considers himself as if he were then dying. And the more solemnly and particularly he searches himself, the more he will be satisfied, and willingly and closely realize his *departure.* Am I a *true penitent?* Do I confess and *forsake* my sins? Do I repent of the sinful actions of my life, and evil tempers of my heart? Am I grieved for my *depraved nature*, as the fountain of unbelief, pride, self-righteousness, and rebellion against God? Am I a *believer* in Christ? Do I believe in the divinity of his person? The glorious *suitableness* of his *offices?* and the *perfection* of his *work?* Do I believe in his meritorious atonement, sufficient to clear me from all my debts? And do I rely on this *alone* for that purpose? Do I believe in the grandeur, perfection, and worth of the *righteousness* of Christ? And that it is "a *free gift* upon *all* that believe (weak or strong believers) unto justification of life? Is my *entire* reliance on this for divine acceptance, and a title to heaven? And is my expectation of teaching, sanctification, comfort, and perseverance in holiness, resting on the divine Spirit? If so, then this is the name wherewith Jesus shall be called, "the Lord my righteousness;" and with that upon my soul, I would not fear a *thousand* deaths. "Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies."

Thus, satisfied of the safety of my state, I shall wish to be in my dying day. Therefore, let me attend to this part of dying *daily*. O Lord! may I ever come to this interesting and pleasing conclusion, "Truly, I am thy servant."

But when brought into a safe *condition*, the Christian who dies daily, will regard each day, the *frame* of his soul. He will aim at a spirituality of mind, in which he hopes death will overtake him. He will ask, am I in a frame I should like to *die* in? He is made *alive*, by the Divine Spirit; but he would be *lively* too. He will long and pray, for that *unwavering* faith—*fervent* love—*stedfast* hope, and *holy* zeal, which he desires to feel in dying circumstances. He will endeavour each day, *to live by faith in Christ*; if guilt settles on his conscience, he will apply to the Great Atonement, with renewed exercise of precious faith—ingenuous confession of, and repentance for the sin. He will *watch* against all obstacles to his *peace*. *Especially* his *besetting* sin. Against the love of unlawful objects, and inordinate regard to lawful ones. He will regard the temper of his mind, with a wise and wary conduct: and attend to the *duties* of his calling, with *circumspection* and *diligence*. "His diligent soul will be made *fat*." His spiritual attention to spiritual objects, his esteem of them, and affection for them, will be "*life and peace!*" This regard to the *state* and *frame* of his soul, is part of the work of *dying*, and this he will aim at daily. May *I*, be *so* ready, to meet my final summons!

The second general remark on these words, is, the *manner of expression* used by the apostle. He speaks with *vehement emphasis*. *I protest*, I swear by your joys and mine, that I die daily. The mode of expression shows, that he did not fear *sufferings* and *death*. No! *indeed*, I do not, as though he had said, I suffer *willingly*. For Christ sake, I am killed all the day long, that is, liable to death. Nor do I shrink back, with unbelieving dread or mean cowardice. No, I meet my perils *magnanimously*, and far from fearing death, I die daily!

It shews—2dly, How strongly the apostle believed in the resurrection of the dead. It appears to me, as he would say, undeniably evident, that the dead will rise. I am *fully persuaded* of its truth and importance. I therefore stand in jeopardy every hour. I therefore am a volunteer in sufferings for Christ. For "what advantageth me if the dead rise not?" But they do. Christ has risen, as the evidence and model of our resurrection. There is nothing terrible in the grave to me. It must resign my body again! I shall be "raised in glory!" And in this state of mind, and the truths which create, and maintain it, I *glory*. I exult in the gospel which *inspires* such hopes, joys, and prospects! and protest, solemnly, that in the experience of them, I daily die, and feel, as it were, my future departure! Joyful hour! No day shall pass, without anticipating its weighty and permanent consequences!

Attend, THIRDLY, to the "*consequences*" of such a daily pro-

cedure. How it would influence our *present happiness!* To walk daily, as on the *borders* of endless joys! To view them as every moment, as on the most *rapid advance* towards us. And to prepare, as if we *knew* this to be the day of entrance into our "Lord's joy!" O! how would this raise the dejected! Support the sufferer! Animate the tempted! and turn the poorest cottage, into a temporary heaven. How would it encourage the dispirited, in keeping the *end* of his troubles from every adversary, in constant view. What ease would it give the throbbing breast, rent with inward conflicts and heavy exercises. It would lessen our mental pangs. It would impel the drooping Christian to take his harp from the willow, and arise and utter a song, not very dissimilar to the seraphic Watts,

> O *glorious* hour! O *blest* abode!
> I shall be *near* and like my *God!*
> And flesh and sin, no more control
> The sacred pleasures of the soul.

But the happy consequences, would appear, further, in the effect of such a temper on our respective duties. What vigor would it put into our private devotion, family worship, and attendance on public ordinances, to consider yourself bound to do to day, what you desire to do, when "there is but a step between you and death?" How would it, through grace, keep the *heart*, when transacting the various business of the day! and lead you to buy and sell and act, as if the hour you finish the matter, you should "depart in peace!" Thus dying daily, how profitably would it affect the tongue—the temper—and the whole deportment.

Another season, it would *very materially* affect — I mean, FOURTHLY, *The season of death.* The Christian overtaken *thus*, would not be painfully *surprised.* No, because, "when his Lord cometh, he does not find him *sleeping.*" O! death, you are no stranger to me; I have conversed with you *daily.* It is no small satisfaction to me, that I have endeavoured to realise thee, O, death! as my friend. I have considered all thou canst do to me! The *worst* thou canst do to me, is to dispatch me quick to heaven. All hail! Death, Christ, and Glory! "O death where is thy sting?" Long did I feel it, in a guilty conscience; but this day, I have applied to the precious Redeemer, "whose blood *cleanseth* from *all* sin." The mortal blow, I have this day *looked* for. It is now come. My soul is in safe hands. I have daily resigned worldly interests. I have, on the whole, habitually preferred the world above. I have been accustomed to view death as desirable, being the way to my father's house. I have daily inspected the state and frame of my soul—lived on Divine Mercy and a Divine Saviour—watched against the hindrances of my peace—"Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!" for I die daily.

No. X.

ON VISITING THE SICK POOR.

THE great *principles* which should actuate the Christian, in doing good to the souls and bodies of his fellow-creatures, are, FAITH in the Redeemer, COMPASSION for the ignorant and the miserable, LOVE to God, and ZEAL, in promoting "the kingdom of Heaven" on earth.

Many persons confine their notions of CHARITY to the gifts of food and raiment, money and medicine. But, it is evident that a man may "give his goods," yea, "ALL his goods to feed the poor, and have not charity," or love. Such charity often springs from motives of bigotry, vain glory, and Pharisaic pride. "The Gospel of salvation," received in faith, purifies the heart from these debasing motives, gives a right direction to our exertions, and imparts consistency to our sympathy: producing an enlightened zeal, it enlarges its sphere of action, and feeds its flame. I pity the person visiting a poor sick man, whose first inquiry is, "are you a Churchman or a Dissenter?" Whether he be a Pagan or a Papist, a Jew or a Mahometan, a Churchman or a Dissenter, a saint or a sinner, a Deist or an Atheist,—he is a fellow-creature in distress. He is "poor and needy," capable of receiving temporal relief and spiritual instruction. Pity, relieve, instruct, console him. This principle and conduct is justified and enforced by our Lord's answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" In which he exhibits the good *Samaritan*, administering relief to a *Jew*, whilst "The Levite passed by, shutting up the bowels of compassion." Do we *admire* the amiable Samaritan? Let us pray for grace to do more than *admire* it; more than *commend* it—even to comply with the Saviour's injunction, "Go thou and DO likewise."

To pay a cold, formal visit, with a little temporal relief, requires no other qualifications than strength to walk, and a few shillings in the pocket. This is needful; but it is not the "one thing needful," a due attention to the soul!—A soul, perhaps, viewing God through the medium of aggravated guilt, deep depravity, erroneous opinions, bodily disease, and obscure dispensations of Providence. We wish, therefore, that the VISITERS of the sick should know "the Gospel to be the power of God to salvation." This will qualify them "to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

"The word in season," must be "the word of God, the word of his grace, the word of salvation." The Gospel is the sovereign remedy for a soul distressed by a guilty conscience and a diseased

body, producing "the peace of God," which is medicinal; and often removes the only obstruction to health—*a troubled mind.* "For," as Solomon observes, "a cheerful heart does good, like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." How important, then, is the Gospel to a sick, distressed, and dying sinner, to inspire hope in the mercy of God, for pardon; faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ, as the way of access to him in prayer; confidence in the promises, for support in affliction; and patient resignation to the promises of God, as regulated by uncontrollable power, unerring wisdom, and all-sufficient grace towards penitent sinners!

A visiter of the sick, who reads suitable portions of Scripture to them, and "rightly divides or distributes the Word of God," may, with a blessing, soon teach the sufferer to say, with "a companion in tribulation," this, "this was my comfort in my affliction—thy word hath quickened me. It is GOOD for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy STATUTES."

"The poor you have always with you," said our compassionate Redeemer; and if they constitute so large a part of the community, and claim the attention and assistance of the rich; much more do the poor in sickness, want, and mental distress, demand pity and help from ALL who can afford it.

The word of God enjoins the duty of visiting "the widow and fatherless," especially "in their affliction;" and affords encouragement to a cheerful discharge of the duty. "Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble."

The time of sickness and distress is favourable to *instruction.* The mind is roused, opened to conviction, made desirous of relief. Relief administered to the body conciliates esteem, and prepares the sufferer for friendly advice. "Blessed are the merciful: and if the soul be more valuable than the body, the exercise of mercy to the souls of men, is mercy of the noblest kind. Our assistance to the body, by food and raiment, money or medicine, should always be subservient to the Gospel. This kind of charity may "prepare the way of the Lord," by accompanying it with reading the Word of God, edifying and seasonable conversation, and fervent prayer to the God who alone can "heal our disease and forgive our sins."

"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," is one part of "pure religion." Many attend to it without *any* religion; others make it the *whole* of religion; and too many, who "know their Lord's will, do it not;" never visit the sick, but transfer the duty solely to ministers, and seem to make it *no part of religion.*

And why are ministers the *only* persons who should visit the sick? Why does the private Christian say, "I pray thee have me excused." One has *no time* to spare from business. This plea is generally false. No time! Do we not see you visiting the *healthy*, who invite you to dinner and to tea? No time? Is *all* thy time

filled up by business? Do you not *waste* more time than would be required for the sick? No time! And what will you think of your neighbours, when you are sick and distressed, if they neglect you, and plead the same excuse?—Let them, therefore, divide this "labour of love" with others; and say, with a spirit of humble dependence, to those of less experience, "The cause which is too hard for thee, bring it to me."

Many persons, old and young, are well qualified for this work; and equally disposed to perform it; but "silver and gold, have they none" to spare: or not sufficient to relieve the necessitous.

A fund, replenished by the liberality of many, will easily supply them. From this fund the ministers of God also may be assisted, who otherwise may often complain, "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not."

Let no one think I am pleading for the negligence or selfishness of ministers. No, it is their duty and privilege, to visit "the house of mourning;" to exhort, convince, counsel, and "to comfort them that mourn." It is the duty of ministers, but not of ministers *only*. They alone are *unequal* to the work. They have sufficient work without it—"care for the churches," and the large circle of ministerial duties, sufficient to "fill an angel's hands." Let ministers, however, attend to the most difficult cases of mental distress; and be "instant in season and out of season," in works of mercy and liberality.

The visitors will feel their obligation to be *faithful* to such benevolent funds, by distributing the money, after strict inquiry, without partiality;—faithful to the *souls* they visit, by adapting conversation to their capacities and necessities; selecting portions of the Scriptures; and offering suitable prayers to God on their behalf.

They will join *prudence* to faithfulness; and let their visits be *seasonable*, short, *condescending* and *sympathising*. I need not add, that whilst they exercise *faith* on the divine care, to shield them from *infectious* disorders, they should be equally careful to guard their own health from the consequences of *presumption*.

And as it is the prerogative of God to give *efficacy* to means, a spirit of *dependence* and *prayer* should accompany their benevolent efforts.

In all your visits, let the SAVIOUR "have the pre-eminence." Speak of his "redemption, his *atonement*, and his *grace*. Repeat his *invitations* to the weary and heavy laden." Mention his *promises* to the penitent, believing, and praying soul. Relate to them your own *experience* of the truth of the promises, and the all-sufficiency of divine grace.

Be not *discouraged* by the ignorance, and ingratitude;—the impatience, or even the enmity to "Spiritual things," which you may witness. PERSEVERE—in showing "your readiness to every good WORD and WORK." "In the morning sow thy seed; in the evening,

withhold not thy hand;" for many feel conviction who are ashamed to acknowledge it. The seed may be striking root; and soon bring forth fruit of thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold."

Be watchful against *prejudice*; for the poor too often envy and misrepresent each other; do not hastily *believe* all you hear; for poverty may prove the occasion of much falsehood: nor abandon a *doubtful* case: but in the Spirit of Job, say, "the cause which I knew not, I searched out."

Consider the nature, and degree of affliction under which many are suffering. They are "holden in cords of affliction;"—setting in darkness, bound in affliction and iron;—trembling under "the rod, the stripes, the chastening of the Lord." Or suffering by confinement, pain and disgrace; complaining, "He putteth my feet in the STOCKS." In such circumstances of trial, "thou shalt open thy hand WIDE to thy poor brother;" for, "he that shutteth his ears at the cry of the poor, shall himself cry and shall not be heard." It is in affliction that "GOD openeth the ears of men and *sealeth* their instruction;" let us be "workers together with God," in accomplishing this design of mercy; that each visitor may prove "a messenger—one of a thousand, to shew unto man, God's uprightness"—in his dispensations. Thus may we approve ourselves to him who "is good and doeth good." Thus may we "remember them which suffer adversity;"—honour the Lord with our substance; imitate the example of him who "went about doing good;" and prove, by delightful experience, that "it is more BLESSED to give than to receive."

No. XI.

DIOTREPHES IN THE CHURCH.

IT often happens, that persons of property are admitted into a Christian church, on easier terms than the poor; and the minister and congregation are elated, because Mr. Z., a man of property, has joined them. Perhaps their joy will be justified by the unassuming conduct of this good man. Perhaps he is wise, humble, teachable, and self-denying. Perhaps he does not give his name and money as a substitute for *other* duties; but visits the sick, aids his minister by his diligence, shuns power, or meekly and faithfully uses it. Let me not be misunderstood, as if I intended to insinuate that *property* and *principle* were incompatible; for Job was, in his day, the greatest and the best man in the East. "Abraham was rich in silver and gold and cattle;" and "walked humbly with God." The evil I complain of, is, that of exalting persons of wealth in the church, on

account of the influence they derive from their property; because they often dictate sentiments to ministers,—insult and oppress members of the church, who are their inferiors in wealth,—bias the minds of their dependants,—produce factions and divisions,—by becoming leaders of a party, or by countenancing others to become such.

Should a person of property possess talents for preaching in the villages, without the spirit of the Gospel, he may boast of preaching without reward; gain acceptance for a season, solely on that account; *deceive himself*, by supposing his *preaching* is acceptable; whilst the righteous are declining in the power of religion, and the wicked "waxing worse" by his inconsistency. Such a person becomes the greater trial to the minister and the church, because he will always find some to excuse his faults, and to flatter him for his apparent virtues. He is above reproof, and opposes scriptural discipline in the church, when it corrects *him* or his *favourites*. If he gives offence to the minister, or a private member, the rule is plain—"Confess your faults one to another." He admits the propriety of this rule, if any one offends him; but if *he* be required to acknowledge his fault, he resents the demand, and complains of the minister and the church for abusing their power. The reproof is ill-timed, or not administered with proper respect. He "covers his sin" by excuses, and dwells on the real or the imaginary faults of others. Readily admitting that he is not altogether blameless, he will rather acknowledge any imperfection, than the sin of which he is *accused*. The consequences are resentment, disaffection, separation, or factious opposition. If a minister should be poor or timid, one of these aspiring men will endeavour to melt down his faithfulness, by good dinners, good presents, or good subscriptions; or to intimidate him by unkindness. He expects a minister to comply with his partialities and prejudices. He is jealous of the notice the minister takes of others. He cannot endure the minister's preference of character to wealth. This principle destroys his consequence. If he should be in office, as a deacon—he threatens to leave it. If this will not satisfy his anger, he will leave the church; and, last of all, he will leave the ministry of the man, who will not become his dupe and his tool. As he loses favour in the church, he will, by a loan to one, a gift to a second, and attention to a third, purchase the favour of carnal men. To them he endeavours to conceal his own faults, by justifying the change in his conduct. The minister, says he, I allow to be a man of talent; but he is arbitrary, personal in his preaching, or negligent in his visits. All at once, this minister, who has been for many years the only man in the world that could please, is now deficient in sense and prudence, character and talents. Or, if he be allowed talents, there is something awfully deficient; he is not the man he appeared to be. This occasions secret slanders; they lead to examination: this produces confusion to the slanderer, and "brings forth the faithful minister's character as the LIGHT, and his righteousness as the NOON-DAY."

Orthodoxy and morality may acquire a good name in the church, especially when aided by a few instances of public liberality. These things are often applauded, by flatterers, as evidences of godliness. The *form* of religion, for which they are often very zealous, exalts them in public opinion, and they "walk in a vain shew;" while some *prevailing lust* gradually forms their character, by progressive indulgence, while *presumption*, under the *name* of faith, supports their spirits. Some trial of the faithfulness of the minister and the church, which demands prompt decision, excites resentment and opposition, gives occasion to the overflowing of "the gall of bitterness," and proves them to be held in some "bond of iniquity."

They attempt to shut a minister's mouth by representing him as arbitrary, personal, or unfriendly to peace. Their motto is, "follow peace;" whilst pride or covetousness, impunity or injustice, selfwill and love of pre-eminence mark their characters. Imperious as masters, tyrannical as members of the church—and dictatorial to ministers, because above them in wealth—they deem that minister proud who cannot debase his character, by paying homage to their vanity or their purse. As they lose their characters in the church they seek one in the *world*, by an indiscriminate liberality. Here they obtain "a name to live, whilst they are dead." A few serious minds may become first their dupes, then their tools; and afford them confidence, in the midst of dead frames, dead companions, and dead works. Accommodating themselves to a low standard of character, of which many men of the world are ashamed, they become stumbling blocks—occasions of falling to many others.

The sound of *peace, peace,* is very plausible; and a stranger might suppose the minister was an enemy to peace: but if PEACE and HOLINESS be the minister's motto—this sufficiently accounts for the censure he bears. A proud, covetous, malevolent or sensual man, cannot follow holiness; but he may easily cry—peace! peace! But, as an eminent writer has well remarked, "PEACE, at the expense of TRUTH and HOLINESS, is purchased too dearly."

A *purse-proud* professor of religion, who lusts for office and power in the church, is the last man to be *trusted* with power. He is wise in his own conceit—his will is law. He would dictate to the minister how to preach, and how to act. He reproves others freely: for, proclaiming his own goodness, he tells you he must be faithful. But he, himself, is above reproof; and impatient of the least contradiction. The PURSE of this conceited man, gives him, he imagines, a right to reprove and teach the minister, to whom he is indebted for his little knowledge. He reproves others, not to correct their mistakes; but to *expose* them and exalt himself. He may stand alone for a time; but if he should meet with a few discontented spirits above the law of Christ, he will "join hand in hand" with them; and his money for a season may afford him opportunities to gratify his resentment to ministerial fidelity. Let us look, then, with

comparative indifference, on *worldly circumstances*, concerning which those who have no sense of a higher interest are exceedingly solicitous; and let us regulate our value of all the good things of this life, by a regard to their *aspects* on our religious characters and hopes. If *low* circumstances may improve *these;* let us look on them as *true exaltation;* and if wealth, honour and applause, may endanger *these*, let us rather *fear* them than aspire to them." There is a weight of character, honour and felicity, "immortal as its great original!"

"*Civil* distinctions, are founded on the different relations and circumstances of mankind, in the present world;" but as God bestows them on the worst of characters, and withholds them from the best—he shows what *little* things worldly distinctions are in his sight. Shall I then admire a rich man for his wealth without character—and slight a poor man of character because he is poor?—Is this imitating God as dear children?"

In estimating the value of external circumstances, the most fatal mistakes are made; the word of God, corrects them. The Christian indeed, though of a poor and obscure condition, "the brother of low degree," is exhorted to "rejoice, in that he is exalted." A *poor* Christian rejoice? Yes!—let him rejoice in his intimate relation to Jesus Christ—his *union* with him by a participation of his Spirit—and that in conformity to him in his low sphere of life; for "he became poor." Let him rejoice that "the poor are evangelized," under advantages which shelter them from the temptations of the rich. "Hearken, my beloved brethren! hath not God chosen such poor persons to be rich in faith;" rich by an interest in all the promises of grace and glory?—His sanctified poverty promotes his dependance on God, the frequency and fervency of prayer;—weans him from the world, spiritualizes his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, his cares and pursuits. To such it may be said, "blessed are YE poor; for your's is the kingdom of Heaven!" "Let not the rich man glory in his riches," as if they imparted to him *weight of character;* for they nourish pride and self-dependance;—become the life of temptation to sin;—alienate his affections from God;—draw round him artful flatterers;—place him above salutary reproof;—give force to his bad passions, by expressions of self-will, by overbearing and tyrannical conduct;—censorious and contemptuous language. "How hardly shall they that have riches, enter the kingdom of God!"

"If a rich man rejoice," let it not be in the height of his circumstances; but that "he is made low," in the humiliation of his mind;—confiding in the atonement of the Redeemer, and the grace of God revealed in his promises, for pardon and life, holiness, peace, and eternal life. These blessings are substantial, satisfying and permanent; whilst the rich man, merely as a rich man, "shall pass away as the flower of the grass." He leaves the world in the midst of his prosperity, which can neither afford him acceptance with God, peace of mind, nor final happiness.

No. XII.

ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteous."

I. *What* did Abraham believe?

1. THE PROMISE, that his offspring should be as the stars of heaven; although he and Sarah were old, and stricken in years.

2. *The promise* of *the land of Canaan*, to him and his posterity, although then possessed by giants.

3. That Jesus Christ, *the promised Saviour*, should come in the flesh; in the line of his family. Gal. iii., 16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not to *seeds* as of many; but as of ONE; and to thy *seed*, which is CHRIST. He saw Christ, in the *promise*; "He saw his *day*," the day of his *incarnation*, or the day of his becoming man. He saw the *end* of his coming, in that eminent *type of him*, the offering up of his only, beloved son, Isaac, as a *sacrifice* to God.

4. *The promise* of a *spiritual seed*, of real believers. He was the *Father*, *pattern*, of all them that believe; the Father of many nations; that is, of believers in many nations.

5. He believed *the special promise*, made to *himself*. "I will bless THEE, and make thy name great. Surely! blessing, I will bless thee, and thou shalt be A BLESSING," to others.

Thus "Abraham believed in the Lord,"—in his MERCY, making the promise; and confirming it by an oath;—in his TRUTH and FAITHFULNESS and POWER, to perform it. Luke i.

II. The consequence of his faith. "It was counted to him for righteousness."

His faith, was not *his righteousness*, as a righteous act; for then he would have been justified by *works*. "Now to him that *worketh*, is the reward of justification, not reckoned of GRACE; but of debt: but to him that *worketh not*"—for justification, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the UNGODLY,—his faith is counted for righteousness; that is, for OBTAINING it. Faith *terminates* on, and rests in, CHRIST for righteousness and justification.

Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted to him, or placed to his account, *in order to*, or for, his justification.

Abraham was not accepted as a righteous man, that is, as pardoned, justified, and accepted, by faith in God as a *Creator* and *Governor* of the world; but by and in *Christ*, as the *substance* of the *promise*.

III. The New Testament confirms the doctrine of justification by faith, and not by the merit of works. It declares that

1. By GRACE, or pure *favour*, we are saved, through faith. Eph. ii. 8.

2. Not of works, lest any man should *boast*.

3. The very *end* of being saved by faith, is, that it might be by *grace*; and to be *sure* to every believer. Rom. xi. 5, 6.

4. If salvation was the reward of human *work*, it will be a *debt*, and not a *favour*. Then, instead of glorying in *Christ*, we should glory in ourselves. 1 Cor. i., 33, 31. We are not pardoned, justified, and saved, by our *obedience*, but "by the obedience of *one* man, Jesus Christ, shall the many be made righteous. Rom. v.

The apostle declares, that if our righteousness comes by our obedience to the law, Christ is dead in vain! If our good hearts and lives could save us, Christ's death was needless. Gal. ii. Nor is even FAITH our righteousness—nor is our *holiness*—nor our *usefulness*—our justifying righteous. From such vain glorying, which is the temper of the *self-righteous* pharisee, who thanked God that he was not an immoral man, nor even like the publican; yet, the publican, seeking salvation, by pure *grace* and *mercy*, went down to his house pardoned and justified—*not* the pharisee! Luke xv. Faith is as really one of *our* works, as repentance, praying, charity, or praise; but these are not the *atonement* for our sins; nor the obedience of the second Adam, which we *receive* as our righteousness, for justification. When we receive Christ by faith, we have an *actual interest* in him, as the Lord our righteousness; and his righteousness is imputed, reckoned, placed to our account.

The shedding of Christ's blood, was for our *redemption* from the punishment of our sins. It was that blood which *atoned* for them; and through which we are pardoned. Eph. i. 7. And because the shedding of his blood, was the finishing act of his OBEDIENCE, we are said to be "justified by his blood." Rom. v. 9.

Those in glory, "who came out of great tribulation, have washed their robes,"—not by their reformation, their *tears*, their *sufferings*, nor even by their *own blood*, as martyrs; but "washed their robes or souls, and made them white by *the blood of the lamb*." John i. 29; 1 John, i. 7.

It is by faith, and faith alone, that we have access to this grace of justification. Rom. v. 2.

This is the straight gate and narrow way to blessedness or happiness. Psalm xxxii. Not blessed is the man, who never sinned—nor the man who thinks his sins are small—nor the man who does not *impute sin to himself*—nor the man who thinks to atone for his sins

by his sufferings, his repentance, or his amendment; but blessed is the man whose transgression is *forgiven*; to whom the Lord will not impute sin! Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth *righteousness*; that is, the meritorious righteousness of Christ; "without works," that is, without works of his own to justify him. Such a pardoned and justified believer, will perform good works, from duty, love, gratitude; not to *save* him; but from the *enjoyment* of pardon and salvation. Like Mary (Luke vii.), "he loves much, because he has *much forgiven!*"

It is the enjoyment of pardon by faith, which inspires peace in the conscience, affection in the heart, obedience in the life, victory over this world of temptations, and opens a prospect of eternal life! The question is answered, "What shall I do to be saved? BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," with a free, full, present, and eternal salvation! And has not Abraham been made a *blessing*? From him and his posterity descended to us, a SAVIOUR;—the GOSPEL;—the *manner* of a believing sinner's *justification*. Are not these *blessings?* "Now these things were not written for his sake, alone; but for us also; to whom it shall be imputed if we believe in Jesus;" that is, confide in his righteousness, for *our* pardon and justification.

This is true happiness. A sense of pardoning mercy and justification by the grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, is being "blessed with believing Abraham." This is the salt to the believer's *temporal* blessings; it gives them the true savour;—it sanctifies our souls—enlivens our duties—lightens our trials—strengthens our obligations—excites us to zeal and diligence to be "a blessing," in usefulness to others—tranquillises the mind under all the changes of life and death—and, persevering in "the steps of the faith of our father Abraham,"—it opens a prospects to heavenly blessedness—"in his bosom," or society for ever.

XIII.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS A FALLEN BROTHER.

1. REPROVE him;—suffer not sin, unreproved upon him:—not in a spirit of pride—as a haughty tyrant hectors his slave—but as an affectionate brother, parent or friend, would mention a fault to those

they tenderly love. Not after informing others how faithful you *intend* to be; and afterwards how faithful you have been. Let *others* talk of your faithfulness. Some persons can be impertinent to their superiors, and then weak enough to add impudence, by the name of faithfulness.

2. Reproof should be regulated by age, relation, friendship, and circumstances. Private sins, should be privately reproved: and often public sins, may be publicly rebuked. But that way in which it probably will do most good, and give least offence, should be adopted. If we reprove those older than ourselves, or above us in rank, *superiors in office, in talents, or usefulness*, we should *respectfully entreat* them.

3. Ministers should reprove and rebuke with *authority*, with *wisdom* and *meekness*; yet with *faithfulness* and force proportioned to the *sin*, the sinner's character, and the circumstances which diminish or aggravate the crime.

It shocks every virtuous principle, to hear a vain young man, or a man whose eye has a *beam* in it, reproving the *mote* in the eye of another; when he has no other claim to such an office, than what is derived from his *pride, conceit*, or *impertinence*.

No. XIV.

SATAN'S CRUELTY.

AMAZING, it is, indeed, that a being invested with powers and capacities for the endless enjoyment of God;—perfectly holy, and every moment the recipient of the divine friendship, should sin against God! Yet such a being was the *devil*, and such a being was the *first man*. Satan sinning and ruining himself, and his apostate colleagues, became as full of *cruelty*, as before, of good-will. This disposition, he discovers,

1. *In his treatment of souls newly convinced of sin.* They often suffer *his* terrors, almost to distraction. As soon as a soul is wounded, he strikes at that wound. He aggravates their past sins; charges them home on the conscience; veils the promises from their minds; urges the most alarming threatenings on their souls; tells them they will surely lose all they carry in their hopes and pursuits; misrepresents God, as *all wrath*, majesty and might, purity and justice; raises up enemies to them among friends and neighbours; and renders God and themselves, Christ and the law, sin and duty, life and death,

heaven and hell, sources of the most cruel suggestions and perplexities. "The tender mercies of the wicked one, are *cruelties.*"

2. *He discovers his cruelty, in temptations to sin.* He lulls all suspicion asleep: and then from a man's relations and connexions, he forms temptations to sin. The customs of the world, and the practices of some reputed *good people*, he strives to allure. He misrepresents the servant and his work to the master; and the master and his commands to the servant. Some servants he tempts to unfaithfulness, or ill-temper, and makes one servant tempt another. Tradesmen he plies to over-reach, now and then, and puts a softer name on the deed. He sets one to oppose another by underselling and misrepresenting. He says such a custom, though sinful, is harmless; followed by numbers, and of long standing. He tries to revive old sins to their recollection; solicits them to a *parley*, then to *consent*, afterward, to commit and then to *repeat* it. He flatters into presumption; accuses till we fear; and suggests falsehoods till we are terrified. He pleads the weakness, disposition, age, occasions, the examples of others, and the pleasures of sin: he says sin is not so evil; proposes the blood of Christ, and the mercy of God, as a sure refuge to impel us to sin: and then aims to plunge us into all the horrors felt by guilty fiends.

3. *His cruelty is evinced in the manner of treating our besetting sin.* Every object and occasion which fed it before conversion, he presents and paints afterwards, to the greatest advantage. And so frequent and persevering is he in this work, that the soul feels painfully; cries to God incessantly; opposes it strongly; loathes itself and cries, O wretched man! "By this sin, he excites evil propensities, even at the throne of grace, by our confessing them. The agonies of a believer, are his subordinate end: but to defile and devour, his ultimate end.

4. *In embarrassed circumstances, he displays his cruelty by trying to heighten the obscurity which darkens and perplexes our way.* He counsels us to keep it to ourselves; and discourages from asking counsel of any. He assures us God does not hear us, and we think not of his nearness. Says he, none ever walked in this path before, who belonged to Christ; you are *overlooked*, or why are you *thus?*

5. *If drawn away to sin, his cruelty follows the poor backslider.* He aggravates his sin. One moment allures him to sin again; then amuses and terrifies. Past experience, he clouds, and tempts the soul to judge of the Lord's past and future dealings, by its present gloomy sensations. He mocks the soul; and "*fills* him with his own ways." Hints that this sin is singular, and could not be committed by a believer. If you were a believer in Christ, he says, Christ would have kept you; but you are no backslider, you never were converted. He challenges; "go," says he, "to the throne of grace; you will meet no answer." When there, Satan confuses the mind

with past crimes; blows up lustful desires, and suggests blasphemy against God, as a proper finishing to the prayer. O how cruel, when thus shut up in the hands of the enemy.

6. *Affliction is another season, for the exercise of his cruelty.* This proves you *hated* of God, if you will believe Satan. He will enlarge on the nature, the degree, the continuance of it, as *proofs* of the Lord's hatred. He brings to mind, the happiness of some saints in their affliction; and then tauntingly asks, "do *you* enjoy the Lord's presence so?"—He now tries to fix guilt on the conscience and *confuse* the soul, by mixing a sense of sin, and the pains of body together. He feeds unbelief by a dull frame, and assures the soul, that its affliction is a curse, and will, as an unimproved warning, increase the soul's damnation. He keeps gloomy objects before the mind, and makes it deal much with the law, and the evils of the heart. Creates suspicion of his attendants in sickness, till the soul frets, supposing itself slighted. He interprets the countenances of friends and physicians as proofs of the height of the disorder. Brings to mind lost opportunities of usefulness; and tells the soul, its grief is all forced, hypocritical and delusive; this he proves by allusions to others known to have wept in trouble, and sinned in health.

7. *He exercises his cruelty, when the Lord withdraws his light and presence.* Now the grand foe, teaches us to judge by our *present feelings*, of the Lord's favour. Now (as if I should ask a man what time of the day it is, by the dial, when the sun is quite clouded), he challenges the soul to produce its grace, faith, love and joy. "Is this," says he, "the pleasantness of what you call wisdom's ways." The mind is now covered with such gloomy views of Providence, as at times to doubt it. "Look at your *enemies*," says he, "how powerful! how numerous! view your own weakness; with God against you. You must one day perish by some unforeseen occurrence." The countenances of friends; the whispers of enemies; and every gloomy spring of suspicion are now open to him.

8. *After a peculiar visit from the Lord, he shows his cruelty.* Adam and Eve were too happy in the divine favour—for him. The Father's testimony to his dear Son, were preludes to his long and painful temptations. "Ah!" says Satan, "may you not be mistaken? Are you not deluded by fancy? What was all that boasted felicity, but the natural passions in a flame, through your *imagined* interest in the Lord's love?" or, he tells the man, his recent favour, is the harbinger of misery; that he will fall into sin, after it, which will increase misery and guilt. Now he swells the mind with pride, and exclaims how *you* are favoured! If others were as diligent as you, they would be favoured also. Another moment he adds;—"you may yet be ruined at last; you will not feel so happy long." Then he departs for a *season*: and suddenly surprises the soul with some lust. Or, he brings up some old sin, and assures you, *that* is not pardoned. And if you go to the blood of Jesus with it, he

says, "you have forgot some other captivating sin. He occupies your attention with the history of your infirmities and negligences, opposes all to your present favoured frame, and declares your joy, at last, no more than that of a Herod, or of a stony ground hearer.

9. *His cruelty is seen, as clearly, in leaving a soul, for some considerable time.* Perhaps, formality or a worldly spirit follows. Now, he surprises the soul: "examine yourself," he says, "are you like the *Bible* saints? No! nor other pretenders! the Bible then, is not true. He asks, "do *you* see its threatnings fulfilled? Do you, or any others, answer its description of a saint? Do *you* find its promises fulfilled to yourself? If so, perhaps, there is no *God*; nay, it is impossible! if there is, how cruel, to suffer man to fall, and suffer all his race to come into the world with such passions, occasions, and propensities to evil. Yet, though all alike, to choose some and damn the rest! to leave the heathen without his word; there can be no God." Now the soul feels provocation to blaspheme God, which it dreads! cannot pray to him; feels wretched. "*Pray to me;* the cruel insinuation comes from Satan. Nor need we wonder, for he said to Jesus, "if thou wilt fall down and *worship me*, all shall be thine."

10. *His temptations from* DOCTRINES *disover his* CRUELTY. Some are *mysterious;* as the Trinity, the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ. Regeneration. He says, they *may* be wrong; learned men differ: there can be no certainty; unless it is, that they are *unreasonable.* Some, he says, are *unjust.* As *election.* "*Parents,*" he says, "think of your dear little children," think of your kind relatives, your amiable acquaintance: what can you receive it, that they may be *damned?*" "others," he says, "are *untrue.*" He demands of you, to say, if many shining and esteemed saints do not fall? And if they fell, so may others: so may *you.* "Look," says he, "at your *own* falls; consider your feelings, fears and failings, and you must see that final perseverance is false." Others, he declares, are nonsense. "*One* man redeem all the elect; he, God and man; God's dear son; happy if the elect had never been; or been damned for ever; and yet deliver *him* up to sufferings fiercer than Hell! and, since they failed, must have his righteousness imputed to them? "It is foolishness, he exclaims!" Others, he declares, are *cruel.* He a *good* God, and yet ordain to damn millions! and for *ever* too! Some, he says, are *delusive, sanctified!* "Ah! look at others, are *they* holy? Look within, are you pure in heart?" Thus cruelly does he wrest the Scripture, and torture the souls of God's dear people.

11. *Persecution is another engine of Satan's cruelty.*—The Roman Emperors, the Pope and his adherents, Queen Mary and her bloody Bishops, were his slaves in this work. "Millions of property has it wrested from God's needy people, and rendered thousands and tens of thousands of families destitute, afflicted, tormented.

The nearest relations have taken their share against believers. Ah! what hard and reproachful names have been affixed by it on the best of men. Racks, prisons, dungeons, and flames, are but sparks of Satan's kindling against God's chosen. Nero, at the sight of Rome in flames, took his harp, and began to be merry. Faint image of Satan's cruelty, who is never so well pleased as when Christians are tortured.

12. *Death also, when near and distant, Satan handles for the gratification of his* CRUEL DISPOSITION.—He raises forebodings of *pain* in death, and thus keeps thousands in bondage. He improves our ignorance of its nature, and points to the imagination the tremendous consequences if we *should* be wrong at last, which he foretels will doubtless be the case. Some awful portions of Scripture, wrested to serve his purpose, with heavy charges from the *whole* life, joining with *particular* instances of infirmity and ingratitude, he now collects, to make the soul believe that it is, and always has been, a *hypocrite*; and that death will only prove "a trap-door to Hell."

XV.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

THE sabbath was made for man: for the rest of his body after six days' labour; and to promote the happiness of his soul.

And by whom was it made or appointed? By him who is the Lord of our time,—expressive of his *authority* to appoint it for holy ends;—his *wisdom*, in allowing *six* parts of our time to follow our temporal interest, and a seventh only, to seek the enjoyment of himself, and promote his glory.

Is a seventh portion of our time too much to be devoted to God, and the interests of the soul?

Has not the Creator, Governor, Saviour, and Judge of man, *a right* to this portion of our time? Does not his goodness and mercy *deserve* it?

Does "the blessed God," forfeit his right, or resign his claim, by "patience, forbearance and long suffering," with sabbath-breakers?

Does he not *bless* the sabbath day, to impart knowledge, holiness, and happiness to those who "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy?" Are not millions of souls converted to God, strengthened in faith, supported in trouble, qualified for usefulness, and cheered

by the hopes of a blessed immortality on that day? Can any fallen creature expect the divine blessing by devoting this sacred day, to idleness, business, or pleasure?

Do those who profane the sabbath, rejoice in a dying hour in such a neglected God, the soul, and its salvation?

Do those who have filled up the Sabbath by sacred duties and enjoyments, ever repent of such conduct, when death approaches, time ends, and judgment and eternity open to their view?

Will not masters, mistresses, and parents, who *allow*, or *command*, or set their *servants* and children the EXAMPLE of breaking the Sabbath,—feel their conduct, when health and life forsake them, to be the sting of death, the terror of judgment, and the overwhelming gloom of eternity?

"Remember the Sabbath day,—to keep it holy:" said the minister at church. What was your answer? "Lord have MERCY upon us," for breaking this law. You added,—"incline our hearts to keep this law."

Was this prayer offered in sincerity? If so,—you will regard the DAY as the Lord's day, and not a *part*, only; and devote the other parts to your shop, your accounts, your company, your journey, your dogs and guns, your bed, or your fields. You will not contradict your prayers, or attempt to make them a covering for your worldly conversation, the neglect of family devotion, forgetfulness of secret prayer, and a serious attention to your Bible, your soul, your salvation, and eternal life. If you are *sincere* at a place of worship—in praying to God to incline your heart to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy?"—you will be the same person in your family and in your closet. The Papists go to church in the morning, and the theatre in the evening, after *saying* the same prayer, without praying. Your theatre may be the table, the field, the trifling or slanderous chit-chat,—the accounts, the sauntering walk,—the fashionable visit,—the novel,—the music, the letter of business, or pleasure,—the devotion to your own will.

Is this Christianity? Is this following Christ? Is this consistent with your morning prayer in public,—"Lord have mercy upon us, incline our hearts to keep this law," of "Remembering the Sabbath day, to keep it holy?" What will your children, your wife, your servants, your neighbours, your minister, your conscience, your JUDGE, think of your sincerity?

The observance of the Sabbath will prove a blessing to us through the other days of the week.

The celebrated judge, Sir Matthew Hale, observed, "I have found by strict and long observation, that a due regard to the duties of the Lord's day hath ever had joined to it a blessing on the rest of my time."

It promotes the peace of the mind and the health of the body: affords us such a *weighty sense of God*, in his grace and providence,

as, cherishes *dependence* for earthly blessings—suppresses distracting cares,—inspires a love of temperance, and shields from temptation, from business, pleasures, or evil examples. Arms our mind with fortitude against the trials and changes of life.

Considering the Sabbath day in its antiquity and author—its nature, design and advantage, who would expect from a rational, sinful, dying, immortal being, an OBJECTION to such a sacred and interesting institution? Yet objections there are.

Ten thousand hair-dressers say, it is against the law *of fashion*, which has more influence on them than the law of God!

Thousands of coachmen and chaise-drivers, ostlers and publicans, hire themselves to masters whom they serve on the Lord's day, as if they had no MASTER IN HEAVEN.

A second class are too *conceited* to learn their duties—too good to require exhortation; but will condescend to visit a place of worship *once* a day, to say their prayers, bribe conscience, save appearances, please a fellow creature, make an appointment for business, show their cloaths, or promote their worldly interest. But their *hearts* are not engaged on divine objects. Religion is their burden, even in its form. "Behold! what a weariness it is."

1. Some would like to keep the Sabbath day, but they cannot spare time.

From what? their business or pleasure?

But have they no business with their Maker,—with a Redeemer?

What! not spare a seventh part of your time for the concerns of salvation and eternity?

Art thou Lord of time? Is time thy own property? Must you not give an account of time, when thy time shall be no more? Are the interests of the soul so trivial, as not to be worth one day in seven,—as not to demand it? Proceed then—and take six whole days, and as much of the seventh as you please, and spend it in the service of Satan,—of the world and the flesh. Go on, trifler—a little longer, and you shall soon know whose time you have devoted to your pride and vanity, your covetousness and lusts. Go on,—until disease renders you unable to attend public worship,—and death drives you away from abused time into an awful ETERNITY!

2. Are your *infirmities* your hindrances?

Then keep the Sabbath at home. But beware of deceiving yourself by excuses, as many do, whose worldly minds contrive to be ill on the Lord's day,—they were so ill, that they could not attend the house of God. But how happens it, that you are generally poorly on the *Sabbath* day? Do your weaknesses keep you from work on the *week* days? Or, are you ready for the world on Monday morning? Who that bears your complaints, can forbear thinking that your infirmities are hypocritical excuses, and prove that your disease is in your *soul*, rather than in your body? Your spirit is evidently indifferent towards God, and the duties and privileges of the gospel.

We may soon hear, that God's hand is upon you indeed, by a long confinement to your chamber, or your bed.

Beware of undue indulgence in eating, drinking, sleeping, sitting idly in your chair, when nothing but a healthy soul is wanting, to induce you to attend public worship. You may see numbers older and weaker, both regular and constant at public worship. Being planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish, and bear fruit in old age. Psalm xcii.

Ask your CONSCIENCE—whether your unfrequent and interrupted attendance, is not from an unhealthy soul, rather than a weak body? Would you not often be at God's house when you stay at home, if by going, you would be as much gratified as at a feast, a market, or a party on pleasure?

3. Some say, "I can spend the sabbath at HOME, as well as at church or meeting."

Is this a *fact?* If God commands you to worship him in *public*, nor to forsake the ASSEMBLING yourselves, as the manner of some is,—how dare you say that this is an unnecessary command —that you can *improve* as much in private as public. Can you improve your soul in holiness and joy, without a divine blessing? Can you reasonably expect the blessing of God, by neglect of his public honours and worship?

Your *improvement* is but *one* of the ends of public worship; the honour of God is more promoted in public than in private, and, therefore, "God loveth the Gates of Zion more than the private families of his people. Does God love the assemblies of his people? Let us imitate him in this, and love it also. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house; the place where thy honour dwelleth."

Alas! do but examine the manner in which such spend their time at *home*, and you will be convinced; relatives, servants, and masters will bear witness against each other. How, then, do you spend your time at home? In secret and family prayer? In teaching your children and servants? In singing the praises of God, and conversing on his word? No. Be assured that those who best spend their time at home, will be most constant and regular at *public worship;* private exercises prepare them for public ones. If your heart be right towards God, you will be sorry when you *cannot* meet the Lord's people; and, like David, say, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go up to the house of the Lord." Instead of such a devotional spirit, you are *sorry* when the Sabbath returns, because it interrupts your business or pleasures. If *you* were glad, you would not go reluctantly, but *willingly;* your attendance would not be seldom, but *frequent;* you would be deaf to excuses, rather than be conquered by them. A spiritual mind will be glad to go to the Lord's house; a worldly mind will rather stay at home.

4. "I have a large family, and cannot attend public worship as I otherwise would."

But other persons also have large families, and some larger than your's, who find time and means to attend, and bring their families with them. They attend in turn, if not all together.

The larger your families, the stronger the reason for a good EXAMPLE of duty to God, and concern for salvation. And shall your family be taught by your example to neglect their salvation—the honour of their God? Prepare to meet them, before the judge of all, as witnesses to your cruel disregard to their souls, and to the will of your Maker.

If your family be large, you ought to be the more desirous of the blessing of God on them. Can you think to *obtain* this by teaching them practically to slight his Sabbath, and its peculiar duties and privileges?

5. There are many who break the Sabbath; you are not alone.

Is that any stronger reason why you should commit this sin against God, than that you should swear, steal, and blaspheme, because many others commit these crimes?

6. "I have no objection to go to church or meeting once a day; this appears decent."

Is this the meaning of the command, "Remember the Sabbath DAY, to keep it holy?" Not half a day—not the forenoon and afternoon—but the DAY. The first day of the week is called "The Lord's Day:" but you plead that only a *few hours* belong to the Lord.

Many persons, by satisfying themselves with an hour and a half at church, and spending the other parts of it in idleness, business, or pleasure, turn that day into a *curse* which was designed for a blessing. Pass through towns and villages, consider places for Sunday amusements—with plenty of liquor! What vain conversation! What a number of young men intoxicated! How indecent and dangerous the condition of young women in such company and circumstances. Can you wonder at so many accidents happening on this day, and that such numbers at the gallows confess they were ruined by Sabbath-breaking?

Do you profess to be a *Christian?* Then follow Christ. Are you a *servant* of Christ? Do you call him your LORD? Then respect his will, his day, his honour.

If your servant should serve you two hours a day, or half a day, will you call this *a day's work?* Would you accept and reward such conduct? Is the Lord's Day *shorter* than any of the six days of the week? Is the *business* of that day less important? And is your knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel so perfect, your tempers so pure, and your happiness so complete as to render an attention to the duties of one day in seven as unnecessary?

A gentleman observed, "I do not go to church to learn my duty, but to say my prayers."

This remark betrayed his ignorance and his pride. Could he not

possibly become *better* acquainted with his duty, or rather, his numerous and various duties, as a husband, father, master, neighbour? Might he not learn much more of God, his attributes, the wonders of creation, providence, and salvation? May not such a conceited man learn more of *himself?*—of his *heart*—the *motives* which govern him—the obligations which bind him—his necessity of infinite mercy, to pardon his sins, and almighty grace, to purify his mind?—What! has this man fathomed the ocean of the love of God, revealed in the person, offices, and work of a Redeemer? Has he no error to be corrected; no ignorance of divine things to be removed; no temptation to conquer; no new necessities to be supplied?—I am confident that if this person was required to describe to his family the *doctrines* of the Gospel; its distinguishing *privileges;* the manner of a sinner's receiving and enjoying them; he would prove his want of teaching.

Ask this man, who is "wise in his own eyes," what our Lord means, in John iii, by being BORN AGAIN? His answer will prove his ignorance, and that he needs instruction at church or meeting; for Christ solemnly and repeatedly declares, "Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Indeed, the practice of too many CLERGYMEN *confirms* the ignorant in their conceit of their knowledge. They preach one, only one sermon on the Sabbath, and that a very *short* one, being not more than requires fifteen or twenty minutes to read it: and not one on the week-day. One might suppose, if lamentable facts did not oppose the supposition, that the people in *general* were above the need of being taught their duties, or of being exhorted to perform them!

What can such dreaming ministers in the established church, or dissenting from it, answer to their Judge, when they give an account of their stewardship, and the souls of their ignorant and worldly-minded hearers "are required at their hands?"

7. A few may object that *business* calls.

A farmer, being reproved for binding hay on the Sabbath, answered, "Business must be attended to; I want this hay ready early on Monday morning; let those attend to religion who have time for it—I have not."

This man was very healthy and rich, and increasing in wealth. He soon caught a cold, and his coughing broke a blood-vessel; spent much on physicians; with tears owned his unutterable folly, in sacrificing the Sabbath, his soul, the truth, to the world—and died!

But may not an *apothecary* be excused from attending the house of God?

Yes—if *mercy*, not *money*, nor indifference to religion, be his motive. But apothecaries of extensive business, who have a *will*, find a *way*. I can refer to honourable instances of gentlemen of

the profession, who so divide their time on the Lord's-day, as to find opportunities of attending morning and evening in the house of God. Should imperious duty demand their attendance, the neighbours know where to send. Alas! the generality of medical men act as if man had no *soul*, and therefore regard only the perishing body. They are "men of the world,"—men of TIME—regardless of a fast-approaching ETERNITY!

How is the Sabbath violated?

1. By *idleness*. If the Sabbath be designed only for the rest of the body, then an ox can keep the Sabbath as well as a man! and those who indulge in *sleep* half that day, can give up their account without fear.

2. By trifling employment, or unnecessary labours. Such are the employment of attorneys and their clerks; *bankers*, who condemn those who apply on the Sabbath, and yet encourage them; all the parade of servants in preparing dinners for the family, and especially for company; poor women, who complained, when servants, of being kept from the house of God to prepare hot dinners, now waste half the Sabbath in staying at home to prepare a dinner. Such are self-condemned.

I know some gentlemen, who meet their tenants in the church-yard, to take their rents!—others in the church-yard to make appointments—to make bargains—as if they were at a market or a fair.

Is this religion? Is it keeping the Sabbath holy? Will God forget this prophane mockery?

And why are *marriages* and *funerals* appointed for the Lord's-day? That the worldlings may *save time*. Is not this to rob God of his time? Is it not treating the sacred duties of the Sabbath as *trifles?*

3. Some persons spend most of the day in travelling, and visit a place of worship in their way. They are going to be ready to *Mark Lane*, or to visit some friends, or to a fair. And is this obeying the seventh command, thy *cattle* shall do no manner of unnecessary work? In vain do such hypocrites *pretend* to respect the day to the Lord, or as the LORD'S day. They use it as their OWN.

There are not a few who, with refined hypocrisy, wander miles from home, on the Sabbath, for their recreation, under the *pretence* of hearing the gospel, which they might hear, faithfully preached, at home.

The truth is, they have no conscience, in employing their servants about their houses, leaving their families, or setting before them such an example of dissipation. They have not *spirituality* to keep their minds awake; and their characters are so stained, as to make

it *most comfortable* for them to hear the gospel where they are *least known*!

But to make the Lord's day a day of feasting—visiting—going on parties of pleasure—walking and sauntering about in idle conversation—is to prove the heart estranged from God; and instead of "seeking, *first*, the kingdom of Heaven," it is practically declaring, that it is not worth seeking, or that they will not first, but *last* of all, seek it. But let such know, that God has not *promised* that such shall find it.

Others plead for a little *recreation* on the Lord's-day.

And is not this day itself, with its sacred duties and delightful privileges, a recreation, after the toils of six days?

Holy souls love holy objects and holy employments. It is their recreation to withdraw the mind from the cares and business of life, to contemplate, love, and adore God, in his works of creation, providence, and redemption. To pour out their prayers and praises, through a mediator, to "the Father of Mercies and God of all Comfort"—to enjoy by faith a Redeemer in his grace, his promises, and salvation. To find repose of soul on the promises—to anticipate by meditation—Heaven, in its society, its services, its enjoyments, its conveyance to them as Christians, and their advances towards it. To spend this Sabbath as if the last on earth, as before the next they may be in Heaven!

This is the business, the recreation, the blessedness of a mind, that is favoured with the *spirit* of the Lord's-day.

4. Make the sabbath turn to some *account*, by a profitable visit, journey or bargain, at least keep up the appearance of religion, if you indulge yourself in habits and conversation as on other days. Be as close as you can. Do not lose the whole day in religion. Do some business, or at least prepare for some early on Monday. Conscience may utter its voice, it is "the Lord's day; remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Then, resolutely "put away conscience," play the man, and make hay while the sun shines.

5. If you can make a good bargain, by a short cut, in marriage for yourself or children—by leaving your principles as a Churchman for a good prize as a Dissenter—or leaving the meeting for the church—labour at the oar, against wind and tide one way, and swim with wind and tide the other way. Keep your eye single on the profit of the thing. If any meddler should say, what! sell your principles, your character, your conscience? "Like Esau, sell your birth-right for a mess of pottage? "Put away conscience;" say you have reasons for your conduct—it is all for the best. If you have failed in time past, by some scrupulous females suspecting your motive, your perseverance is rewarded, you have at last gained your point; care not who calls it "a golden calf," or a golden cow.

6. Study well the *conveniences* of "putting away conscience;" and the *inconveniences* of attending to its dictates. If a servant,

you may, in more ways than one, take a little at a time; and an apprentice or shopman may profit by the *till*. If you have a vote at an election, do not hesitate to sell it, and *swear* you will not take a bribe. As an attorney, you may obtain good pay for a bad cause: your client sows and suffers, but you reap. If summoned as a witness, remember or forget, to make a good day of it.

Will not servants be the accusers of their masters, and children of their parents, at "the judgment seat," who have taught them by their example to rob God of his glory, ruin their own souls, and ruin the souls of others Reader, prefer your own will to the will of God a little longer—let the remaining sabbaths be spent in hypocritical visits, one part of the day at a place of worship—in sloth, dressing, visiting, amusements, business, travelling, or pleasure. Every sabbath evening leaves you seven days nearer to the hour, when "God for all these things, will bring you to judgment."

No. XVI.

THE INFIDEL'S EXCUSE.

Let us hear him. He asserts that some persons professing to be followers of Christ are *hypocrites*.

This is a serious and awful charge; is it *true?* is it *just?* Hear his *evidence*. He refers us to *facts*, stubborn facts. *Mr. A.* professes to believe the word of God, and drinks to excess. *Mr. B.* is zealous for religion, but he is covetous. He pays his customers, but delays payment too long; pays a part when he should pay the whole; forms excuses which are unjust, demands deductions, takes advantage of their being in debt, undervalues what he buys, rates what he sells at too high a price; he pays his servant his week's work, but demands the work of more than six days. *They* work—in days some hours longer than God has made them. Some of these men begin their day at five o'clock in the morning—at four—and even three o'clock. A second works till seven, eight, or nine in the evening. If the servant complains, the master tells him, if he is dissatisfied, other poor men will be glad of his place. What can the poor man do? He feels the oppression of his covetous master, but feeling also for his family, he submits. What must the poor man think of his master's *religion*. Perhaps he concludes it is *worthless*, because it leaves him unjust and oppressive. Here he is right, but when he

concludes that *all* who profess religion are alike, he becomes as unjust and cruel to his neighbours, as his master is to him. The Bible condemns the master's injustice to the labourer, and the labourer's slander against the friends of religion.

One says his neighbour professes religion, but it is all a pretence; for all are agreed that this very religious man will over-reach his neighbour, by *artifice* and *lies*, and then swell with pride at his prosperity. Nothing is more mean and contemptible than to be *purse-proud;* but a man may be so blinded and hardened by covetous habits, by prosperous lies and dishonest tricks, as to deceive and flatter himself, by putting on the profession of religion. And it it is no uncommon thing, to see the hypocrite giving out a hymn, foremost at a prayer-meeting, and presenting part of the gains of dishonesty, at a collection, to that God, who "hates robbery for burnt-offerings."

This is a stumbling-block to "men of corrupt minds," who "wax worse and worse," and excuse themselves by the conduct of "the hypocrites in Zion."

Look at *Mr. C.*, said an infidel; he has no more real faith in the Bible than I have. What proof does he give of his faith? It is true, he attends as a hearer of the Gospel early and late; he often leads the prayers of others at their prayer-meeting; he quotes the Scriptures against the sins of others; he appears shocked at the unbelief and ignorance and folly of his neighbours; he talks of religion; attends the public societies for promoting religion; subscribes to the support of his minister, and invites him to his table: is very zealous for sound doctrine; he criticises sermons, books, and characters. All this makes "a fair show" of religion. But his unbelieving neighbour observes his "vain glory," his proud conceit of his own understanding, his proud, arbitrary, passionate, and malignant temper and censorious conversation. He cannot endure the least contradiction, nor the softest censure; but reproves others without respect of persons, and always reproves them publicly, to display his own knowledge and faithfulness. Yet he can flatter his flatterers. His entire aim is to exalt himself. These are your *saints!* exclaims the unbeliever; who glories that he is not one of these *hypocrites.*

Mr. *Q. hears* the Gospel, and has heard it from his childhood; but he never understood, believed, or enjoyed it. To say the most, he has heard it as he heard a *song*, or a *tune* on an instrument. He commends the sermon, as a very good or a very fine discourse, and there leaves it, as having done his duty, and returns to his worldly element. There are rare occasions in clear, descriptive, and impressive discourses, which resemble a good looking-glass—when he sees much of himself and is serious; but he turns from it to the favourite objects of his customary pursuit, and "forgets what manner of man he is." His character is formed, *not* by the Gos-

pel he hears, but by his *temptations*. He is cast in the mould of worldly interests, worldly amusements, and worldly company.

Let the persons who accuse a whole body of professed Christians of canting, that is of hypocrisy, "first cast the *beam* out of their *own* eye, before they boast of discerning a mote in their brother's eye." Otherwise, the Searcher of Hearts will soon bring home the charge against them, which they level at others, "THOU HYPOCRITE!"

Nothing but truth before *His* throne
With honour can appear;
The painted hypocrites are *known*,
Through the disguise they wear.

Pray!

Lord, search *my thoughts* and try *my ways*,
And make *my soul* sincere;
Then shall *I* stand before thy face,
And find acceptance *there!*

You say you are no hypocrite, because you do not profess religion. You profess to be *sincere*, to be *honest*, to love *justice* and *veracity*. You profess to be *humane*, *kind*, and *impartial*. Why, then, do you *watch* for the imperfections of persons professing godliness? Why rejoice to *hear* unfavourable *reports* of them? Why circulate them to gratify the enemies of religion? Is this justice? Is this loving your neighbour as yourself? You speak fair to their faces, from fear or interest. Is this sincerity? Wherein does it differ from *hypocrisy*? You say, if a person thinks you in fault, you wish him to *tell* you so. Then, why are you angry at reproof—just reproof? Why resent it by backbiting? and why not tell others their faults to their faces? Is not this hypocrisy? If a man thinks you an infidel, because you swear and talk lewdly, devote the sabbath to visits, company, business, or pleasure; why are you angry with him for thinking you have no religion, when you have not even the *form* of it? You condemn a man as unjust if he does not pay his debts, especially to you; and are indifferent to your debts of gratitude, of love to God. You receive your health, your faculties, your food and raiment, and life from God; and neglect his word, his will, his sabbaths, his worship. Is not this monstrous hypocrisy? You use means to restore your health; you commend the sailor who throws overboard his valuable cargo to save his life. Why condemn others for using means to save their souls, and neglect the means of saving your own soul? Is not this hypocrisy? You condemn your servant for neglecting your business, and for idleness and trifling, and set him the example! Hypocrisy still! You have your children devoted to God in baptism, and set an example to them of violating their obligations.

"I thank God I am not as other men, nor even as this publican," said the conceited, censorious, cruel, slanderous, boasting pharisee. And with similar dispositions does *Fastosus* talk, when he hears a

report of the sin of any professor of religion. Without waiting to learn the truth or falsehood of the charge, "report, saith he, and we will report." These are your *saints*—your sanctified ones! Thank God, exclaims *Fastosus*, with malignant pleasure, I am no *hypocrite*. Do you believe him? Does he believe himself? If he does, he deceives himself, without asking the question, "Is there not a LIE in my right hand?" *Fastosus* boasts of his *charity;* but "charity rejoiceth not in iniquity," as he does. "FOOLS make a *mock*, a *laugh*, at sin." Is not *Fastosus* "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity?" Is not his profession of charity vile *hypocrisy? Fastosus* glories in *sincerity*, because he does not *profess* religion. Is not this to "glory in his shame?" What is the Christian religion? It consists in believing what God says, and doing what he commands. The Christian religion is the religion of Christ. To trust him as a Saviour, and obey him as our Lord, is religion. When it suits the interest or convenience of *Fastosus*, he speaks well of religion, and goes to a place of worship; but he *swears*—he often talks *unchastely*, so that modest men of the world blush in his company. He neglects the word of God—sports with its truths, and slanders those who believe and honour it, and calls them canting hypocrites, whilst he proves *himself* one. The Sabbath day, which is the principal support of religion, he prophanes, by devoting the greatest part of it to idleness, light conversation, feasting, visiting, travelling, settling his accounts, pleasure. A swearing, sabbath-breaking, dissipated worldling, calling himself a Christian! Can any hypocrisy exceed this? Negligent of his Bible and his soul, "making light" of the Saviour, dulging his lusts, setting an evil example to his family and neighbours, raving against *hypocrisy!* He rails bitterly against it in others, indulges in it himself, and boasts of his sincerity! *Fastosus* sets an example of *hypocrisy*, and blames others for imitating him. If *Fastosus* prefers his business to religion, he also prefers being "a busy body in other men's matters," and neglects his own. He talks with "great swelling words" of the king, the parliament, the nation, and the parish, but cannot govern *himself*.

His favourite maxim is, "As ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them;" and then takes a criminal liberty with the sentiments, religion, and conduct of his neighbour!

"Thou hypocrite! first cast out the *beam* from thy own eye; and then pull out the mote from thy brother's eye." *Fastosus* talks much of the fair dealing man—the honourable man—and boasts that he never said any thing of a man that he does not say to him. This proves that he loves his *own* lie, whilst he professes to hate lying in *others;* for he speaks fair and respectfully to his customers; and with cowardly hypocrisy rails against them and their religion, where they cannot defend themselves.

The fact is, as the very companions of *Fastosus* allow, that he does not *understand* religion, because he never studied it or felt it;

and he never studied it, because he *dislikes* it. Yet they meet with persons to whom he professes to regard it; but this, they say, is to cloak his real character, and serve himself. *Fastosus* may please himself with the rattle of words, *decency*, *sincerity*, *fair dealing*, *honourable*, and defame and persecute the saints and the sanctified; but "he who ordains his arrows against the persecutors," will not miss his mark when the moment comes, because the persecuting hypocrite wears a mask. Wait, reader: "Behold! the JUDGE is at the door." See this bravado, confined to his bed, with a sick stomach, a burning fever, an emaciated body, an enraged conscience, approaching death, and an opening to the judgment seat, and an eternal separation of saints and sinners—and then!—then let him, like one of similar character, exclaim, "If I were but sure the Bible was false, I should not care; but if it be *true*, as I *fear* it is, I am lost!—lost for ever and ever!" and, with a sigh, expired.

No. XVII.

WHAT WAS THE CURSE UPON THE GROUND FOR MAN'S SAKE?—GENESIS iii. 17.

IN answering this question, we may consider the curse of God—

1. In its nature. It is the righteous sentence of the law, condemning mankind to suffer punishment for their sins.

One part of this curse consists in rendering the earth less fruitful, its productions less wholesome, and as it requires more labour to procure them. Gen. iii. 14—17. "Cursed be the ground for thy sake," was the divine sentence; that is, for thy sin. The effects of this curse were, barrenness of wholesome and delightful fruits and herbs; and the spontaneous growth of useless and noxious weeds. "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Hence labour and fatigue, pain and disease. God "turned the fruitful land into barrenness" for the wickedness of Adam, "who dwelt therein."

The sin of Adam subjected the ground to this vanity. To what various labours has sin reduced man in obtaining his food! How he toils in ploughing, sowing, and reaping; in threshing, cleansing, and grinding the corn when produced; and in other labours in preparing his bread! The labours of mind and body for subsistence attend every act and profession. Some are destroyed by working in mines, by pernicious airs: impure waters, chilling damps, and destructive earthquakes, embitter and destroy the lives of others. In one place, ferocious animals endanger man's life; in another, the tamest animals shake off his dominion and kill him. Blight and mildew

destroy the fruits of his labour. In sorrow he is doomed to eat the fruit of the earth, until he returns to the dust.

If he obtains the best productions of the earth, in larger portions than generally fall to his lot, they often lead him into temptations; feed his appetite, inflame his passions, bring him to an untimely end, if not destroy both body and soul. Thus has a righteous God "cursed our blessings."

Extensive, awfully extensive, as is this curse on the earth for man's sin, it has,

2. Its limits. We may sing of mercy mixed with judgment. This is apparent in the influence of that labour on the *health* of man, which the earth demands of him. The very sweat of his brow is made subservient to his health and comfort. He also obtains from the earth valuable metals and minerals, which promote his security, and afford him a thousand conveniences. A vast variety of plants are nourishing, and medicinal waters abound, to support life and restore health. Here grow flowers, which regale his senses; there trees, which administer to his support, his protection, and comfort. He still has dominion over the fowls of the heaven, the fish of the sea, and the beasts of the field.

It is true, these advantages are not obtained without labour; but as all were forfeited, and our habitations cursed, it is no small favour that we can procure enough for our subsistence, even by labour. Considering, however, the manner in which this curse on the earth is limited, by such various and multiplied advantages and comforts, filling our hearts with food and gladness, we ought gratefully to acknowledge, that, in a very great degree, "the Lord our God hath turned this curse into a blessing;" especially, if we reflect that every thing short of Hell is a favour.

The reflections which this subject suggests, are—

1. The malignant influence of sin on man's present condition.

2. The great forbearance and goodness of God towards all mankind. This is implied in the Apostle's charge even against the Pagans, "neither were they *thankful*." God might have doomed man to Hell at once, Gen. viii. 21.

3. That, however the curse on the earth be moderated, man may increase it. Isa. xxiv. 5, 6; Deut. xxviii. 15—20.

4. The wisdom and justice of God, in the relation between the natural and moral world; the state of the earth, and the character of man. God has *no paradise for sinners!* This corresponds with our condition being less healthful and less pleasant. Sickness, pain, and health attend us. Fruit less salubrious, seasons less temperate, noxious exhalations, sudden changes of atmosphere.

5. How greatly indebted to the MEDIATOR are men in general, especially *believers*, Gal. iii. 13; by him all things subsist, Col. i. If even a *cumberer* of the ground is spared, it is through his intercession, Luke xiii. 6—9. Through him, God is the *Saviour* or pre-

ever of all men. But believers are redeemed from every curse, Rev. xxii. 3. "There shall be no more curse."

6. This should reconcile man to his present condition. If less delightful, less ensnaring, labour occupies the mind, promotes health, checks the effects of idleness on the passions, and thereby checks disease and sin. To the poor and industrious Christian, the rich and temperate one, still it may be said, The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, Ps. xxiv. 1.

7. How thankful should the Christian be for the salutary influence of his trials, Rom. viii. 28. The trials of his condition rather prevent than punish sin; yea, they improve him. They may be *chastisements*, but they are not *curses*.

No. XVIII.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

Q. How shall I know that I possess the spirit of Christ?

A. By ascertaining that the FRUITS of the spirit are within you.

This manner of proving it the Devil cannot imitate, as he can an impulse or a direct revelation, saying, thou art a child of God. The latter testimony Satan has given to thousands, and flattered their proud conceit of themselves, as distinguished favourites of Heaven. I have known professors, whose carnal, proud, malignant, sensual spirits, witnessed with God's spirit, in his word, that they were the children of Satan, maintain an unshaken confidence for many years, from what they called the spirit's *direct* immediate testimony, that they were children of God! and the *stronger* their *delusion*, the higher their confidence! But what is the spirit's witness or evidence? Rom. viii. The spirit of adoption, opposed to the spirit of a slave—the spirit of a child—the spirit of *love* to God as our *Father*—by love to the children of God, *as such*. We know we are children, "because we thus *love* the *brethren*." How were the Thessalonian Christians to *know* their *election*? By an inward, direct testimony, or voice, saying, thou art one of the elect? No! "Knowing your election, by the *work of faith*, the *labour of love*, the *patience of hope*, in the Lord Jesus, which remained steadfast and lively, under their afflictions, temptations, and persecutions. If we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, and possess that image, is not this conformity to Christ, the Spirit's evidence, witness or testimony, that we are pardoned, justified—the children of God?

And does not an enlightened, relieved, and purified *conscience*, bear the same witness or testimony, with the Spirit of God in his Word, and by his work in the heart? And is not this testimony in which the Spirit's work and our own spirits or consciences agree—the Spirit's witness or testimony with our spirits. And what was the witness or testimony which inspired St. Paul with courage and joy? This is our rejoicing, the testimony or witness of our *conscience*. To *what* was the witness, testimony, or evidence, given? That in all simplicity and godly sincerity—not by fleshly wisdom, carnal policy; but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world."

Many are wise above what is written, in wishing to be satisfied by an *immediate* witness, testimony, or voice; who would be satisfied by "the fruits of the Spirit," *if they possessed them.* Satan can give such a witness; and many believe it: but Satan cannot produce the image of Christ in the soul; and so *prove* witness that we are the children of God. But he often gives a direct witness, that such as possess Christ's image, are not his children, though he cannot *prove* his testimony; for "no lie is of the truth." The Spirit has borne witness, and still does, that his fruits in you, will witness to your being a child of God. Your conscience or spirit, is warranted to bear the same witness. Without this, all other witnesses are deceivers; and with it, *you* will say, nothing more is necessary.

The same delusion extends itself to other subjects—the Spirit of God must give them a direct revelation, or witness of duty, or remove doubts—or assure them of an event. Waiting for a delusion, they very soon meet it. A strong suggestion of Satan, or their own self-love, assures them of the thing they desired. Nothing can shake their confidence. "They *love* to have it so." They are ready to believe as they desire. They *imagine* the Spirit has revealed it to them. "They hold fast" the "deceit," until events mortify them by disappointment. Then I have witnessed, rank infidelity, blasphemy, and despair. "The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart *fretteth against the Lord!*" Such are above the *word*, because they cannot prove their conversion by it; but I am directed to try every spirit by that word; and by it to "know the spirit of truth, from the spirit of error." If any spirit should, by a direct suggestion, assure me, that I am a child of God;—I must judge this spirit's witness, by the witness of God's spirit in his word. "To the law and the testimony."

I have known persons under the Gospel, living in intemperance, dishonesty, and unchastity, declare, that they have not entertained a doubt of their interest in Christ for fifteen or twenty years. They said the Spirit's sacred witness satisfied them. But the Spirit's witness in the word was—"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die!" "Hereby know we the spirit of truth from the spirit of error."

The error of many Quakers is, not the Spirit's witness by his

fruits, in the heart and life, harmonising with the Word of God and a good conscience; but that they have the suggestion, revelation of the Spirit or his witness, *without* the Word—*above the Word*—and even *contrary to the Word.*

If any one would know that he is a good man, it must be proved by "the fruits of the Spirit." If he desires more, he is deceived, and may deceive others. But, generally, those who desire more are satisfied with less; and satisfied even against proof to the contrary fact. They judge the Word, which should judge them. "By their FRUITS ye shall know them!"

No. XIX.

THE LYING TONGUE.

A lie, is the wilful disagreement of the mind and the tongue, with a design to deceive. *Truth*, as it stands opposed to the sin of lying, —is the agreement of our *words* with our *intentions.*

An *equivocation* conceals or misrepresents, the real sentiments and intentions of the speaker. It contains two senses of a word or sentence; and the liar by this artifice wishes to impose on you the false sense, as the true one.

"It is wilful deceit that makes the lie; and we wilfully deceive, when our expressions are not true, in the sense in which we believe the hearer apprehends them." "A lie is a breach of promise: for whoever seriously addresses his discourse to another, tacitly promises to speak the truth, because he knows that the truth is expected."

What are the *occasions* of lying? *Guilt* produces lying; and one lie occasions a second to conceal the first; and a third to hide both of them. Hence the criminal artifices of self-vindication and of misrepresenting those we desire to injure.

Curiosity induces lying,—when one person to obtain the knowledge of another person's affairs, pretends a knowledge of the thing of which he is ignorant; or not to know an affair with which he is well acquainted.

Covetousness tempts men to "get money by a lying tongue;" by diminishing the real value of an article in buying; and magnifying the worth of what we sell. "It is nought,—it is nought, saith the buyer;" and when he has purchased the goods, "he boasteth," of his great bargain.

Envy lies to injure the character of another person; or to disturb his peace, by pretending that he have heard an ill natured word

spoken of you, when the liar never heard any one utter it but himself.

Pride and passion hastily fabricate a resentful lie; and falsely quote the name of a man of sense and character, to confirm their own assertions.

Shame creates in the liar, the fear of detection; and the fear of being exposed, leads to "a refuge of lies."

Party-lies are told to gratify spleen, by exalting those who either favour the liar and are "workers together," to wound the good names of those who do not favour their party designs.

Fashionable lies are told to visiters or tradesmen, when inconvenient to receive the former and pay the latter. If engaged, or ill, or it be inconvenient, why not say so, rather than teach a servant to endorse your lie, by saying you are not at home?

A talkative disposion is a fruitful source of misrepresentation. "In the *multitude* of words, there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise." Many who neglect their accounts, their business, their families, and their souls—are wiser in their own eyes than SEVEN men who can render a reason." No subject is above them:—they make free with ministers of the crown, and ministers of the Gospel; mend the constitution and improve the book of God! These "Athenians meet to tell some new thing," true or false; they speak positively of a doubtful report, and raise it into certainty. If the slander be trifling, they color it to the taste of their company.

Malice is a root of lying by false accusations; by misrepresentation of your actions, words and motives, the malignant liar attempts to destroy your reputation, bending the tongue like a bow; for he will forge a lie, which shall *conceal* itself by pretensions to the purest motives, and the tenderest pity for the person it wounds. Malice will quote your words and put a false construction on them; *omit* some of your words and *add* others:—and by the tone of the voice, the emphasis and action, entirely pervert your intention. Malice will lie, by concealing the real *occasion* and *design* of your words; and assign a different source and end to them.—It will so assume such a whining tone—such tenderness of conscience—such concern for the injured character, with such appeals to Heaven for the truth of its own lies—as by its "good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple." Its words are "smoother than oil," piercing the deeper "like very SWORDS."

Malice also lies by pretending to tell *all* a person knows of a story, and yet leaves out a principal part.

Offend a purse proud man—who prefers money to principle; and "his tongue walketh through the land." In this world he may practically say—"my tongue is my own;" but in the next world, may long for water to cool that same false and slanderous tongue, tormented in flames!

Idleness is often equally productive of lies. Having little business at home; and disposed to neglect that, the pious gossips gad and tattle, from house to house, very "busy bodies in other persons matters," collecting a few tales of slander, they are qualified to afford fresh gratification at the tea table; furnish conversation to strengthen the bond of malicious union; and after lying, as the order of the evening, conclude with family prayer! But "the sacrifice of the wicked, is an abomination to the Lord."

The *resentful* liar, stung by a kind and faithful reproof, will soon commit himself,—and hate you more for *detecting* him; and by a second lie, he will endeavor to hide the first. You did not, he says, think I was in *earnest?* I only spoke the words as a joke. "He casts around firebrands, arrows and death; and says, "was I not in sport?" I knew several professors of religion, who for twenty years past have vented their resentment against kind and faithful reproof; and as constantly denied their own words when detected; or pretended they were *joking:* but they have outlived their characters where *best known*, and proved Solomon's words, that "a liar," whom he calls a wicked man, "is *loathsome* and cometh to shame."

A lying hearer of the Gospel, is "a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and an arrow that flieth at noon day."

If a minister preach salvation by grace, without the *merit* of good works; he is often represented as an enemy to good works.

Should he preach the necesity of good works, and the inconsistency of evil works, with the doctrine of grace,—he is often represented as an enemy to the doctrine of salvation by grace.

If he faithfully preaches against lying and slander,—covetousness, fraud and extortion, by dealing with short measures and weights, by overcharging customers who owe the seller money, and by passing off goods of bad quality for the best;—if in his sermons or private reproofs, he exposes the criminality of fleshly lusts, in single and married men; and tears off the veil of excuses from the dishonest, the extortioner in charges, and the pilfering tricks of the devout hypocrite, who endeavours to cover his hypocrisy by his prayers, his professed creed of evangelical doctrines, his giving money for religious purposes; and his soft, whining cant in conversation on ministers' sermons, village preaching, and religion in general, what will the lying hearer say of him? He will represent his faithfulness as personality,—impute it to bad motives, pride, severity, unpeaceableness, or perhaps *in secret*, insinuate something against the preacher's moral character.

Should the faithful minister concur with the church, in the exercise of church discipline, to censure, suspend or separate the immoral, according to the word of God,—the slanderous hearer will palliate his sin, cherish an impenitent temper, charge the minister and church with severity; and perhaps persevere in self-vindication, until "he that judgeth righteously," shall make him feel in body

and mind the sentence past on him,—in his family and circumstances;—in the fire of affliction and on a dying bed!

Some readers may think I should act wiser in *concealing* these faults in those who profess religion. Why?—lest I should expose religion itself. Expose religion! no, I expose the liar under the *mask* of religion. Expose religion! what has a LIAR any religion? —He may *seem* to possess it; talk of it—profess it; but his very *profession* is falsehood. The Apostle James does not spare such a man. "If any man among you seemeth to be religious;—and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart,—this man's religion is vain." Observe his *appearance;* "he SEEMETH to be religious;" by professing to believe the Gospel—attending some places of public worship—conversing on religion—associating with religious persons—subscribing to the support of religion—giving money to charitable uses—extolling ministers of the Gospel—perhaps praying in his family and at the prayer meeting.

By these things he "seemeth to be religious."

Mark his *sin;* he "bridleth not his tongue;" especially from lying, in different ways.

How the Apostle accounts for it;—"He deceiveth his own heart;" by presumptuous hopes of salvation and of concealment.

The decision on his state; the Apostle does not say *religion* is vain; but "*This man's* religion is vain!" That is, it is worthless and ruinous; and his profession itself—A LIE!

Lying is as expressly forbidden, as stealing or profane swearing. "Ye shall not steal; neither deal falsely; neither lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou prophane the name of thy God: I am the Lord." Lev. xix. 11, 12. Those who plead that lying in some cases is lawful, may as well allow, in some instances, oaths in levity and deliberate perjury. The same divine authority prohibits, in *all* cases, without exception, prophane swearing, theft and lying. The New Testament is equally decisive: "wherefore putting away lying—speak ye every man TRUTH to his neighbour; for we are members one of another. Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Here we are commanded to put away lying, as a work of "the old man," that is, of a corrupt, sinful nature;—because in *civil* and *christian* society we are "members one of another."

A spirit of *persecution* smites the good man, with a lying tongue. The immoral and prophane, are not the objects of the lying persecutor; but the person who lives under the power of vital, spiritual, and experimental religion. The proud conceited moralist, who builds his hopes of Heaven on *notions* and *forms;*—who knows nothing of Christ but his name,—will drop "the poison of asps from under his lips," to inflame the minds of others against the *christian* whose sentiments are *evangelical*, and whose experience of the truth is *pure* and *enlivening:* For, "he that is born after the flesh, will

persecute him who is born after the spirit;" as Cain persecuted his brother Abel, Ishmael his brother Isaac, and Esau his brother Jacob. "Even so it is now."

The *habit of threatning and flattering children* is the cause of many lies. Such persons seem to think children have no right to truth. But will a child believe you speak truth, after detecting your falsehood? And may not your example of lying to deceive, induce them to deceive you and others? By kicking a stone and striking a chair; and exclaiming, naughty stone, or wicked chair, to hurt the child! You convey a *falsehood*, and cherish absurd resentment in your child, until that resentment burns against every one that does not indulge his selfwill!—

The *artificial sympathy* of apothecaries and physicians, may tell *comfortable lies* to their patients;—assuring them they are *better* when they are *worse;* and that they will probably *recover*, when they believe "the sickness is unto *death*."

The lie counteracts the tendency and defeats the end of the dispensation; and by cherishing delusive hope, prevents repentance, lulls the patient into false peace—prevents the dying man from making his will—and may occasion lawsuits and misery in the family. Why not speak the truth—direct the departing soul to a Saviour, or recommend a minister of the Gospel to instruct, encourage and console him?

False tenderness will often lie, by giving a good character to a bad servant; and criminal self-love, will give a bad character to a good one. Is this justice to their masters and mistresses? Is it justice to a good or a bad servant? Does it not tend to discourage fidelity, and countenance all the bad qualities of servants? Would you wish that others should act so towards you?

As you reasonably "would that others should do to you;—do ye even so to them."

Lying is in itself so base and dishonorable, that men of the world will often hazard their lives to revenge the imputation of it. Give a man the lie, and you will violate the point of honour. If you charge him with gaming, lewdness, swearing, it may pass unresented; but to say he *lies*, it is an affront not to be forgiven. One reason suggested for this keen resentment is, because lying implies the want of courage to speak the truth," and therefore telling a man he *lies*, is calling him a coward; yet thousands of your men of *honour*, who with a sufficiency of *proud resentment* and *daring presumption* to fight a duel, have not the courage to speak the truth. Duels often commence with a falsehood; and then, like all bad causes, they cannot be *carried on* with success, without the aid of more falsehood.

It is pleaded by a few philosophers and divines, that in particular cases, lying is lawful; because they assert some men, such as robbers, assassins, and madmen, have *no right* to truth; and when lying is

useful it is *expedient*! To this it may be answered: First,—If persons under the influence of passion, prejudice, or terror, may decide that lying is a duty; although as *expressly forbidden* as *Idolatry, taking the Lord's name in vain, or murder*; why not allowed to decide, in similar circumstances, that these crimes are lawful? It is pleaded, some great and good men have dissembled. True, but their sin does not lesson the evil of lying, nor secure you from punishment; you are not in all cases obliged to tell all you know, but you are not allowed as a Christian, to tell a wilful falsehood.

But suppose your *motive* be good? I answer,—If you "do evil that good may come, your condemnation is just."

Query—May I not tell a lie to save my life? Jesus Christ answers —He that loveth his life (to avoid the cross) shall lose it; and he that loseth his life (by suffering in his duty), shall save it." On this priciple the apostles, and primitive Christians, and martyrs, sacrificed liberty, property, and life, rather than commit sin to save them.

If you declare that to be false, which you believe to be true; or that to be true, which you believe to be false; if you rashly assert without examination, through indifference to truth; if you profess to declare the whole truth, and conceal a part; if you speak truth and colour it by circumstances and motives, which give it the appearance of falsehood, to deceive, you are guilty of lying.

When you indulge a disposition to *ridicule* good principles, good characters, and good actions, you are guilty of a slanderous lie.

Flattery, by ascribing to a person excellences which you know he does not possess; and cruel *censure*, which falsely denies what is good, or imputes that which is criminal to another, is lying.

If you wilfully break a lawful promise, you are guilty of lying. "Nothing can release you from your engagement, excepting inability to perform it, or the consent of the person to whom you made it."

"The whisperer," or clandestine liar, "separateth chief friends." He confides a slander to your friend, who trusts another of your friends with it, under solemn charge of *secrecy*, Your friend's mind is poisoned by prejudice for months or years. You "perceive his countenance is not towards you as in time past," but the lurking slanderer is concealed. Uniting knavery with falsehood to cover his malice, he says, he has *heard* other things against you; and gains credit to his lie, although he never heard such things except from *his own voice*.

He gravely affirms that he was very *sorry* to hear you censured, when he *rejoiced* in the backbiter's tale; and declares he vindicated you, when he actually joined in the malignant imputation.

The clandestine whisperer is "a pestilence walking in darkness," blasting your character, injuring your family, your property, and usefulness. He strikes the *parent* or *master* by a hint, that the

daughter or the servant, is in the family way. To wound the tradesman he envies, he whispers that his goods are indifferent, his charges high, or that he is not to be trusted. If a poor man offends him, he tells those who are disposed to employ him, that he is idle, or drinks too much. One is in debt, a second extravagant, a third is weak. A neighbour mildly reproves him,—he thanks him, and then secretly sows a slander. If his neighbour be faithful, the secret slanderer whispers—that he is rude, if not insolent.

A man stedfast to truth, is an obstinate bigot; a prudent man is covetous, a liberal man is weak, and a faithful minister is bad tempered, and bigoted, and personal, and arbitrary.

When the whisperer has softly laid his slander on your mind, he repeatedly charges you to keep it *secret*, assures you he is very sorry to hear such things, which he grieves to say, are but too true.

"He who utters the *first* falsehood under *ten* degrees of temptation, will as readily utter the second under the influence of eight, and the *sixth*, without any temptation at all. In this manner, any man living, may soon become *a confirmed liar*.

By a habit of lying, a false trader deceives you on the state of the *market*; a false advocate sells your cause; a false physician lulls you into dangerous security; a false attorney picks your pocket; a false minister of the gospel inspires presumptuous hope, and a dangerous peace; a lying beggar cheats you; a false friend betrays your interests and your secrets; a false witness swears away your rights; a false judge perverts the law to your ruin; a false reasoner cheats you out of truth; a flatterer deceives you into fatal conceit of yourself; and a slanderous whisperer blasts your character.

A sense of the criminality and destructive consequences of this fashionable sin, "according to the course of the world," is worn out by custom. Such persons can tell a minister and a church, that a member ought to be excluded from a Christian church for fornication and adultery; for theft, drunkenness, and prophane swearing; but not for lying! As if the evil of lying, which defames the character of others, destroys the peace of families and nations, "sets on fire the course of nature," ruins the soul, by making it "a child of Satan;" defies the God of truth in his commands and threatnings; and is the occasion of all the sin and misery of man in both worlds, were a trivial offence.

The proud, impudent liar, seldom relates what he hears or reads without adding, diminishing, or colouring; and endeavouring to exalt himself by inventing something new, wonderful, and witty, flattering himself the company were charmed; but he is no sooner gone, than shaking their heads they exclaim, "he is a very lively companion; but such a liar, you cannot believe a word he says!"

If highly respectable characters are mentioned, he is intimately acquainted with them,—dined with them at one time, corresponded with them at another; although he never spoke to them, or even saw them.

If you want a favour, you at once receive his promise to speak for you to his friends, without the least intention to serve you. He has seen in his travels, or read in books, all you name; and has the vanity and effrontery to know characters, motives, and circumstances. He accommodates his conversation to his humour; and with a daring indifference to truth, he can lie, politely to flatter; and rudely to insult. To answer his design, he will slander a good servant and commend a bad one. If a medical man, he can declare a patient better when he is worse; and worse, when he is better; that he is in no danger to one—and to another that he has no hope of him.

Is he a patient?—He will often declare his medicines useless, when he has not taken them.

Is he a *tradesman*?—He sells an article of inferior quality for the best: sells you short weight, measure—declares the article cost him more than he really gave for it;—and that he gains little or nothing, or loses by it, when he makes a good bargain!

Is he a stock-jobber?—He tells false news.

Is he a collector of news for a newspaper?—He misrepresents facts to gratify his spleen, defame a character, wound credit, and disturb the peace of society.

Is he a *sectarian*?—He will scandalise those who differ from him; impute to them sentiments which they abhor, and motives which they never felt.

Is he a *suitor*?—He will disguise his real motives, magnify his property and means, and mask his pretentions by religious sentiments and feelings, to which he is a stranger.

Is he a *beggar*?—Lying is his trade, to rob the public by imposition.

Is he a clergyman or dissenting minister?—He pays so little regard to truth out of the pulpit, as to occasion those who hear him to doubt the truth even of the Word of God from *his* lips.

Remedies against Lying.

CHERISH a deep sense of the insufficiency of human power and skill to govern the tongue. "For every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the TONGUE CAN NO MAN TAME; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

Do not despair of deliverance from the sins of the tongue. Look by faith and prayer to the all-sufficiency of the Grace of God. Jesus Christ is able to save you to the uttermost, from the guilt, the power, and consequences of these sins. His blood cleanseth from all sin; and his spirit can destroy the reign of sin. Trust in his mercy and power, praying. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; and keep the door of my lips. Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips; and from a deceitful tongue." Pray for a steadfast purpose against this

evil. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Remember, "life and death are in the power of the tongue." It proves you in a state of condemnation or of acceptance with God, by the frame and disposition of your heart; for, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." And, "By thy words, thou shalt be justified," as a real believer in the Saviour; or, "By thy words thou shalt be condemned," as proving you under the power of "an unbelieving heart," and the delusion of "a dead faith."

Think of the personal evil you suffer, by indulging a disposition to falsehood. Guilt and suspicion attend you in all places. Conscience reproaches you—judgment awaits you—suspicion of being defeated increases your guilt, by inventing new lies to hide your disgrace.

Consider the injury done to your neighbour. "The man that beareth false witness against his neighbour, is a maul, a sword, and a sharp arrow." Your tongue is a maul to smite his reputation, a sword to wound his peace, his credit and his family; and "a sharp arrow, aimed in concealment, at a distance, when he is unarmed; which pierces his name suddenly and deeply." The aim is malignant and deliberate, and secret, in "bending your tongue as a bow for lies;" which aggravates your guilt, and augments the injury.

Meditate on the Punishment of Lying.

ALTHOUGH every liar does not, like Ananias and Sapphira, suffer *immediate judgment;* it will overtake them: for lying is an abomination to the Lord. A lying tongue is but for a moment—God will expose and punish it. "Bread of deceit may be sweet to a man," in *the gains of trade*, the sports of wit, and the gratification of malice; "but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel;" that is, he shall suffer pain and misery.

No. XX.

"THE BAG!"

I SHALL not call the reader's attention to the *colour*, but to the *contents* of the bag. The "green bag" brought to my recollection the following words in Job xiv., 16, 17:—"For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag; and thou sewest up my iniquity."

The conduct and sufferings of a man, in this world, illustrate the meaning and confirm the truth of the Sacred Scriptures. The text was uttered by an illustrious character in the depth of adversity, first cruelly suspected, and afterwards unjustly accused, of the worst of crimes, as the cause of his afflictions. The accusations produced the vindication of himself, expressed under the influence of inflamed passions. When this righteous man experienced a temporary shock to his faith and patience, and apprehended the divine displeasure against him—the impression was strengthened by his unparalleled sufferings, and a gloomy imagination, the scope of which was enlarged by present appearances. His despondency occasioned the momentary supposition that, "his transgressions were sealed up," in readiness to justify present and future judicial proceedings against him.

> All annall'd in thy rolls, beneath thy seal,
> My sins are treasured, and thy wrath I feel.

He is humbled, restored, accepted, and vindicated. The charge of slander is fixed upon his accusers by him who "judgeth righteously;" and "brings forth" the good man's "righteousness to light, and his judgment to the noon-day." His vindication is found in the following words:—"Take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer for yourself a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." Thus was Job sustained and improved by his affliction, and qualified gratefully to admire the divine wisdom, faithfulness, and compassion. His trials were indeed "grievous for the present;" but after being exercised thereby, they yielded the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." How true the recorded experience of the "upright," that "many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all!" Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the END of the Lord:—"That the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy," in hearing the prayers, vindicating the characters, and effecting the deliverance of his slandered and afflicted servants.

And can we who believe the Word of God, wonder, if "the *red* horse of war" should again "take peace from the earth?" The "black horse" of famine, with "a pair of balances in his hand," should introduce a famine and pestilence? And "the pale horse of death" should be "followed by hell?"—Rev. vi. If the righteous be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as THIS? Are not these sins laid up in store with me, and SEALED UP among my treasures?"

When we consider the nature and variety, the extent, duration and

singularity of Job's sufferings, we cannot wonder at his desponding conclusion, that God had marked his sins, even those of which he was not conscious, "sewed up" or joined one to another, from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year; and "sealed them up" to appear against him. Sealing is designed to preserve secrecy, to manifest distinction, to mark authority, and ensure security. In the latter sense, his sins, he feared, were secured as charges against him.

If such may be the apprehensions of a good man, what must we think of the blindness, conceit, and fearless presumption of bad men?

The records must be opened, the evidence clear and full, the result certain and awful—all, all impenitent sinners, standing before God and each other. No mediator will then interpose his mediation; no advocate will offer a plea—the "One Mediator between God and man" will then call to judgment those who have finally slighted his grace.

Here no criminal will be overcharged, nor his sins palliated. No law of worldly honour, worldly fashion, or interested expediency becomes a rule of judgment. No! these laws themselves will be found acts of rebellion against the revealed will of God: "*Crimes* of high degree." Here the transgressions against GOD will be the principal subjects of judgment, and not, as in this world, the offences of one sinner against another. It is not the vindication of human actions, but the divine law, character, and government, that will regulate divine proceedings. Human criminals, accusers, witnesses, and judges, will all find a real court of equity and of conscience; when "sinners will be all conscience, and conscience all light and life."

No sinner will be here a mere spectator, but will stand accused; and the charges will not only affect the interests of time, as in this world; it will be the "ETERNAL JUDGMENT."

Here is an acknowledgment of the perfect *knowledge* of his sins. "Dost thou not number all my steps? Doth he not see all my ways and correct all my steps?"—All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. "Hell is naked before him," the sins of the wicked in hell; "how much more the hearts of the children of men!"

But he is not an indifferent spectator of their sins; but marks them as a moral governor and righteous judge. He takes a judicial notice of sin: and it is this consideration which produces the anguish of guilt, which exclaims—"If thou, Lord, shouldest MARK iniquity—O Lord, who can stand?"

An impression of the *glorious holiness* of the divine majesty deepens conviction, and increases alarm. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and canst not look upon evil." "God is angry with the wicked every day." "If ye TURN NOT, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath prepared for him

the instrument of death; "he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors."

The *strict justice* of "the Judge of all the earth," is included in this conduct of "sealing up transgressions." No false charges or false witnesses are "sealed up" against him; but his actual "transgressions." His sins of omission and commission: the sins of his actions, his words, his heart. God will "search his head and try his ways, to give him according to his works." He will receive "the wages of sin;" the infliction of the "sorer judgment," of which he is "THOUGHT WORTHY."

The complaint implies an acquaintance with the *divine law* or *will*, as the standard of duty, and the rule of judgment; for "sin is the transgression of the law;" and "where there is no law, there is no transgression." The obligations of fallen man are not diminished by his fall from God; for sin cannot annul the relation of man to God, as a creature to a Creator. He is still the subject of his moral government, and accountable to him as his judge. Having violated the law, he cannot be justified by it; for "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." By the law is the knowledge of sin. It "stops every mouth" from pleading personal righteousness for justification; as by it, "all the world became guilty before God." This divine law, whether expressed in the *two* great commands or in *ten*, is "holy, just, spiritual and good;" and if the sinner do not "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness," the righteous sentence of the law will be executed upon him.

In the believer's salvation, "the law is magnified by the obedience of the Saviour to its commands, and by his suffering its penalty."—"Christ is the end, the scope, the perfection of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." His is the Gospel, in which the Redeemer "magnifies the law and makes it honourable." If this Gospel be rejected, by unbelief, impenitence, self-righteousness and the love of sin, the law will be magnified in his condemnation.

The importance of viewing God, through a *right medium*, is suggested from these words. Job had contemplated the Divine goodness through the medium of personal, domestic, and public prosperity: but now, in a moment of conflict with temptation, from a painful and loathsome disease—the loss of property—bereavement of his children, in a sudden and awful manner—the contempt of neighbours—the accusations of former friends—and the profaneness of his wife, presented aspects of Divine displeasure, which brought a dark cloud over his mind. Through this dark medium of affliction, he contemplated God as visiting him for the sins of youth and riper years—sins of flesh and spirit; sins of omission and commission; sins personal, relative, and public: as "sowing up," or joining his transgressions one to another, through days and weeks—months and years; and sealing up the various and perfect records for judicial proceedings against him.

It is the same with a self-righteous moralist—ignorant of the perfection of the Divine law, and cherishing a false estimate of his own sinful character and duties, he presumes on his own imaginary virtues, and through them exalts himself, and claims a reward, where should fear the punishment of his pride, and flee for refuge to the merits of the Saviour, and the mercy of God.

It is thus the *Deist*, rejecting the medium of revealed mercy and grace through a mediator—overlooking the glorious holiness and justice of God—views him only in his greatness, power, wisdom, and goodness, through the medium of creation, or through his own indifference to sin, and imagines God to be "such an one as himself."

The *impenitent* sinner, looking at his Maker, through his law, as too strict in his commands, and severe in his threatnings, related to him as his lawgiver and his judge—neglecting faith in the mediator and the promises of mercy to the penitent—abuses his advantages by indulging his sins, and sinks into despondency, saying, "There is no hope."

The *awakened* sinner often judges of the designs of God towards him, through a dark dispensation of Providence, an afflicted body, a guilty conscience, and the threatnings against the impenitent.

The *weak* and *timid* Christian, by the same method of estimating the Divine regards towards him, contemplates God through the ever varying frames of his mind. If he is comfortable, God loves him; and when unhappy under conscious imperfections, fears that he is the object of Divine displeasure. If he always made the Word of God the standard of his judgment, he would perceive that God is of one mind—changes not—that with him is no variableness, not the shadow of a turning.

The *enlightened* and *established* Christian, desires to contemplate the "Blessed God," through the medium of revealed mercy and justice, in a Mediator's sufferings and intercession. He looks up to God in Christ, as "the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, fulfilling his *promises*. His EXPERIENCE also is a medium through which he sees God. Looking to the *past* acts of divine grace, power, and faithfulness—his "tribulations work patience;—patience, experience; and experience confirms his HOPE." Rom v., 1, 4.

If such a person sees or hears of the sins of his inferiors, equals, or superiors, he will lament them as injurious to themselves and to society, and dishonourable to God:—but he abhors all unnecessary disclosure of them to gratify curiosity and malignity. As a *subject*, he feels for his civil governors in all their relations, obligations, and trials; and as a *Christian*, commends them to God in prayer, for counsel, protection, deliverance, and salvation.

He is taught by the Book of God, that "fools make a mock of sin;" their own sin, and the sin of others. He knows the evil of sin, by the very means of his redemption from it by the sufferings,

the blood, the death, of the Redeemer! He feels "the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile," to indulge and excuse it. By faith in the veracity and justice of God, he contemplates the disclosure of "the secrets of men," as well as their open sins, before the judgment seat of God, who "numbers all their steps," and "seals up" the awful records of their crimes, for a judicial process before "the great white throne." He realises "small and great, standing before God"—the judgment seat—the seals broken, the books opened, and the unbelieving and impenitent—the ungodly and the impure—"JUDGED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS!"

In the records of *this Bag* will be found, the sins of those who have polished and flattered the crimes of their superiors; and widened the breaches which wisdom and fidelity might have healed.

The crimes of those "unjust judges," who have "justified the wicked, and condemned the innocent; both of which are an abomination to the Lord."

The verdicts of those jurors, who have delivered a sentence which violated truth, justice, and conscience, to please a party, to serve a friend, or to accommodate themselves to popular prejudice.

The wars of Christian princes will be found "sealed up;" for God will make inquisition for blood;"—bring the guilt of shedding it, on those who have occasioned, advised, and cruelly promoted, the shedding of human blood.

In the records against persecutors of good men, under the pretext of "doing God service," will be found, the corruption of the worship, the abuse of divine institutions, cruelty to the best of ministers and Christians, defiance of sacred obligations, and reigning unbelief under a profession of faith, as "the root of bitterness," which after all the blood it has shed, "like the horseleech, cries, give, give." Blood! blood! blood! is still "crying from the altar—how long, O Lord, holy and just, wilt thou not avenge our blood?"

The sealed archives contain the sins of fashionable dissipation—the violation of the Christian Sabbath—the lies and clandestine slanders—the awful profanation of the name of God—the injustice and dishonesty, in all its forms, of the gamester, the oppressive lawyer, and the unfair tradesman. Among these will be found, the seducer of the wife and the virgin, under the mask of friendship—the clamorous subject, all zeal for king and church, to acquire an office, to serve his family, or extend his trade. And professing faith in the Bible he seldom reads, and veneration for the church he seldom attends, he takes "the name of God in vain," to confirm his word, abuses his mercies by intemperance, and endeavours to cover his infidelity, his sensuality, and dissipation, by relieving the distressed, and by a shew of liberality in supporting benevolent institutions.

"He who hath the keys of death and of the unseen world," hath recently "taken away our mighty men. The general, the admiral,

the statesman;—He has entered the palace, and removed from us the lamented princess—the queen, with our venerable monarch.

Do our "men of high degree, hear the voice which crieth in the city," the senate, and the court.—"Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die?" Do they "break off their sins by righteousness?" Are they "wise to consider THEIR latter end," in its nearness—its swift approach—its nature and its *consequences?*" Do they attend those ministers of the sanctuary who enforce on them "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?" Who call the attention of their hearers, as the apostle Paul did the attention of "King Agrippa, to temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come?" or drawn into the whirlpool of business, politics, and pleasure, which "drown men in destruction and perdition," while hypocritically and presumptuously "waiting for a more convenient season?"

If God should forget their obligations and their sins; if he should be imposed on by the name of Christian, without the character and duties of the Christian; if he will "hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain;" if he should approve of those who are "lovers of pleasures more than the lovers of God," even on the Sabbath day; if he should erase the declaration from his word—"whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge;" if he should allow them to change the standard of duty, from his will, to their own, then they may "walk after the light of their own eyes, and the desires of their hearts." But if God be true and faithful; if God be immutably holy and just, their "transgressions are sealed up" for judgment; and "what they sow, that shall they also reap." Then, "he that is *guilty* shall be *guilty* still; and he that is filthy shall be filthy still." Yes, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and give an account of all things done in the body." Yes! "God will bring every work into judgment, with every SECRET thing." And do the fashionable in high life, BELIEVE the Word of God, while declaiming against infidelity and immorality in their inferiors?" Are they not "partakers of other men's sins," by exhibiting a shameless example of PRACTICAL INFIDELITY to their equals, and to the lower orders of society? And while we "sigh for their abominations in the land," can we suppress our fears when we read, "shall I not VISIT for these things, saith the Lord? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Let our great men listen to the voice of him who may soon "come near to them in judgment, and be a swift witness against them:" Let them listen to the voice that crieth, "prepare to meet thy God!"

If they turn a deaf ear to his warnings, they will meet him and each other in the invisible world; meet each other at the judgment seat; meet each other in hell; reproaching themselves and each other for their crimes, their folly, their madness, and their misery.

Meet in hell! What harshness! How shocking! True; it is

shocking, that such characters should appear at church, in solemn mockery, crying, "spare THY PEOPLE:" for if these are "the people of God, the righteous," where are the wicked? Shocking, indeed, that such persons should continue in their sins, and publicly pray, "from thy wrath, and from EVERLASTING DAMNATION, good Lord, deliver us!"

It is a difficult thing for a man to think "soberly of himself," who is surrounded with worldly distinctions and flatterers, and habitually addicted to "think more highly of himself," in a moral point of view, "than he ought to think." He is deceived by others—he deceives himself, and judges himself by a law of his own; the law of honour, of fashion, of expedience, of inclination. The perfect law of God, he is above; and the obligations of the gospel, and example of Christ, are below his standard, and left for fanatics, enthusiasts, and methodists. He pities or despises the dupes of real religion, and flatters himself, although he is not of too much consequence to *die*, that God will excuse *his* beloved sins, who has been esteemed of so much consequence by the most polished sinners, that, like him, "walked after the sight of their own eyes, and the desires of their hearts." What will God bring such genteel sinners unto judgment? Will that God, who has distinguished them by rank, by wealth, by learning, office and power, ever say to each of *them*—thy glory "is departed?" Must they obey the summons, "at such an hour as they think not;" this day, or, "this night—thy soul shall be required of thee; give an ACCOUNT of thy stewardship?" Yes;—

> He sees with equal eye, as Lord of all,
> A hero perish, or a sparrow fall.

Yes: as a righteous governor of the world, "he regardeth not the rich more than the poor;" and will "bring them to judgment," for the sins they have committed, and the sins they have occasioned; and make them feel the weight of the charge against a proud, luxurious, and abandoned king of Babylon,—"the God in whose hand thy breath is, hast thou not glorified!" They may revel in polite society, like Nebuchadnezzar, with "a thousand of his lords" and ladies, until they read their doom, "written by the fingers of a man's hand;" not "on the wall;" but in that book which now informs them, that "the heavens shall reveal their iniquities, and the earth shall rise up against them;" and "hell from beneath shall be moved to MEET them at their coming!"

They may forget their own sins, and laugh at or condemn the sins of others; or, forget *both* in fashionable dissipation; but neither time nor art, will blot out "the transgressions sealed up" for an impartial and public judgment.

But let not the gentleman, the tradesman, the labourer, think, that the sins of their superiors will justify *their own* practical infidelity, because they raise their voice against them. "God accepts no man's person" because he is rich or poor. And if the middle and

lower orders of society, neglect the word and worship of God, or pay a hypocritical attention to them; if they present to their families and neighbours, examples of rash censure, discontent with Providence, and murmuring against the badness of the times, whilst they follow the steps of their superiors in drinking to excess, profane swearing, unchaste conversation and conduct, spending a part of the Sabbath in idleness, unnecessary business, travelling, visiting, and feasting, or forming parties of pleasure on "God's holy day," let them not expect to "escape the judgment of God." Their transgressions also are "sealed up," and the bed of sickness, the dying hour, and following judgment, will make horrible and fatal "*disclosures against them.*"

The duellist is a man of honour. If his *pride* is offended he demands the satisfaction of a *gentleman*. His keen resentment hastily sends a challenge. The sword or pistol must satisfy his revenge. He hazards his own life and the life of his fellow gentleman. Perhaps one or both fall in the cruel contest for honour; and are hurried to the tribunal of God, where the guilt of human blood cries to justice for satisfaction for the crime of murder, the miseries of weeping relatives and friends, the injury done to society, the contempt of the laws of God, the sanction given to sin, in imitating him who was "a murderer from the beginning." A thousand profane oaths, which dishonour the name of God—the long standing debts of honourable tradesmen unpaid, the crimes of drunkenness, gaming, and whoredom, give few of these *gentlemen*, these men of honour, any offence! "My soul, come not thou into their secret: to *their* honour, be not thou united!"

The transgressions of the duellist will be unsealed, who has deliberately hazarded the life of the friend, the husband, the father, the useful member of society; hazarded his own life, too—and for what? His country—his salvation—the honour of God?—No! but to gratify his pride, his resentment and revenge, for a real or imaginary offence against *him*, in the spirit of that cruel enemy of man, who was "a murderer from the beginning," He ventures to rush into the presence of that God, who hath said, "Thou shalt do no murder;" and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. These giants in transgression, after demanding satisfaction for a word, agree to sign their own summons, to give satisfaction to the moral governor and judge of the world, for violating his law, disbelieving his threatenings, defying his power, destroying themselves and a fellow immortal, and practically invoking and accelerating their own damnation.

The violations of the divine law, the injuries of society, the infectious example, the pangs of the widow, the tears of the fatherless, the verdict of conscience, the claims of divine justice, demand satisfaction. And if the rancorous passions and cruel actions of the duellist, are no qualifications for a heaven of love and order, holiness and bliss—"Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Dying in his sins, by the deadly sword or bullet, he separates himself

from the society of saints and angels; and that he may never disturb the harmony of the heavenly world by his proud, diabolic temper, he "goes to his own place," as much adapted to his disposition and disorderly conduct, as Bedlam to a madman.

The mercenary and cruel physician; the selfish and treacherous apothecary, who conceals his artifice by artificial sympathy; the haughty and unjust magistrate; the false and fraudulent lawyer; the perjured juryman; the false witness; the spy, who, under pretence of serving his country, "sells himself to work wickedness;" the tyrannical master and the faithless and fraudulent servant;—all, all these shall know, that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth," that "their sins will surely find them out," and that whatever arts they may use, in denying, excusing, covering, and forgetting their sins, they are "sealed up" to become the records of impartial judgment.

One class of society may enjoy a delusive peace, by respecting the law of the land and the law of fashion, while they violate the law of God; and deny their sins, or excuse them, by the temptations which they love, the false standards which they create, the crimes from which they abstain, the hypocritical duties which they perform, and the worst examples which they condemn. They may draw a comparison, flattering to themselves, between their own sins and the sins of others; judge their superiors, exalt themselves above their equals, and despise their inferiors, and proudly "thank God they are not as other men;" but "the judgment of God, is according to *truth*;" who impartially "seals up" the records of their sins, the guilt of which cannot be cancelled by time, by forgetfulness, by self-flattery, or by artifice.

If you have defrauded your neighbour, slandered his character, violated your engagements to him, flattered him and his duties, and excused his sins;—if you have made him the dupe of your lies and misrepresentations, or the tool of your malice—or the deluded partisan of your selfish, hollow, and persecuting zeal for religion—think not that your ostentatious charity, your evangelical sentiments, and your constant discharge of duties at church, chapel, or meeting, will diminish the awful records of your guilt in the "sealed bag." You make no restitution to the injured, like Zaccheus, to prove your repentance sincere; but add the crime of *hypocrisy* to your other sins, to appear against you when the "seal" is broken!

Nor will your politeness and hospitality to a clergyman of the Church of England, or a dissenting minister, to melt down his faithfulness and conform him to your taste and criminal moderation in religion, "cover your sins;" but make you "a partaker of his sins," and the effects of them.

The time is fast approaching when "the bag" of individuals will be opened, and the genteel violations of the Christian Sabbath, by feasting, idleness, dissipation, business, and pleasure,

especially in the highest order of society, will appear in their crimson colours. It will then be seen whose example countenanced the abounding and practical infidelity of the day, and occasioned the crimes which they affect to condemn in others. We want a faithful Latimer in the family of every sinner of rank—in every pulpit—to "lift up his voice like a trumpet;" and show to each "house" of British "Israel," without exception, "their transgressions."

With a blessing on such faithful admonitions, our attention would not be confined to "the green bag;" but each man, repenting of his wickedness, would exclaim, with imploring solicitude for mercy—"What have *I* done?" We should, under such an influence, approach "the throne of grace," and pray with ardent and persevering importunity, "God be merciful to *me* a sinner!"

Do our *great men see*, and suitably *improve* the discovery of *a divine hand?* Are they become *examples*, which it would be safe for their inferiors to follow? Are they examples of temperance and chastity—of justice and faithfulness—of faith in the *truth*, and reverence for the NAME of God? Are our superiors in rank and station patterns of HOLINESS and DEVOTION? If, after all our sufferings, we still behold "wickedness in high places"—flattering courtiers, selfish politicians—the law of fashion, the law of honour, "falsely so called," preferred to the law and gospel of "the blessed God"—can we wonder at the sight of worldly minded ministers of the sanctuary—selfish, sensual, and dissipated gentlemen—avaricious and oppressing lawyers—fraudulent tradesmen—unfaithful husbands and wives—haughty and overbearing masters and mistresses—idle, dishonest, and disrespectful servants—all under the profession of religion and loyalty? Can we wonder if such scarlet hypocrisy in religion should produce infidelity, opposition to the government, and laws of the country, in the lower orders of society, with such examples of rebellion against the law, the government, and the gospel of "God our Saviour?"

A Christian, *indeed*, must be a good subject, his duty being clearly expressed and strongly enforced.—"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the LORD'S sake; honour the king; pray for kings and all that are in authority under him, that we may live peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty. This was the duty of Christians, even under the tyrannical government of Nero, the Roman emperor; it cannot be less so under a government, which affords protection to my life and character, my liberty and property. I am thankful to him "who maketh wars to cease to the ends of the earth." The late protracted war was "a sore judgment;" and its effects will be transmitted to the next generation. The trial is general, and to the majority of persons very grievous. We *feel* the effects of "the calamity that is over past." We ought to feel them, and we *must* feel

them. How can they answer the *designs* of infinite wisdom and goodness, if not deeply felt. The Prophet says, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not SEE; but they shall see!"

The God of Justice has more arrows in his quiver; civil war, famine, and pestilence. Let not England presume. Her crimes are aggravated by her pre-eminent advantages; and they who "know their Lord's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes;" and "to whom much is given, of them much will be required."

It may be thought by those who have not read the sacred Scriptures in the spirit of the sacred Scriptures, that I have more than intimated, that when "the bag" shall be unsealed, the Christian indeed has not any judgment to fear. This truth is part of "the glad tidings of great joy," and constitutes the gospel. Those who die under the LAW must answer for ALL their sins; but those who live and "die in the faith," immediately enter the society of "the spirits of the just, MADE PERFECT" in holiness and joy. At the judgment day, the Saviour will "appear the second time to their SALVATION." Then "Who shall lay any thing to their charge? Who is he that condemneth them? It is God that justifieth!" Those who "die in their sins," will rise and be judged in them; but "BLESSED are the dead which die in the Lord;" and to their public honour and happiness the judgment day will confirm their blessedness. At that solemn and decisive day, the Judge of all will say, "Come ye BLESSED of my Father!" Indeed, "that word by which we shall be judged at the last day," has already pronounced the destiny of the real penitent and believing soul, in the following words: "BLESSED is the man to whom the Lord IMPUTETH not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." It is this free, ample, perfect pardon, and the spirit of holiness and peace that accompanies it, which enlivens the duties and alleviates the sufferings of life—disarms death of its sting, and judgment of its terrors. The ignorant, the self-righteous, the lukewarm, the hypocrite, and the presumptuous, may cavil at this delightful truth, while they continue in the repetition of it, rest in hearing and reading it, that "God pardoneth and absolveth all such as TRULY repent and UNFEIGNEDLY BELIEVE his holy Gospel."

Let the devotees to worldly pleasure lay before us an equivalent to that substantial joy, which faith in the gospel inspires, and we will listen to them; and if they cannot accept this challenge, and despise and deride our principles and their effects, we will commit them to the compassion of God, and leave them to the decision of that day, when "the judgment shall sit and the books be opened!"

* This was written during the unhappy and painful period of the late Queen's trial. I should have withheld it from the public, had it not been *exclusively* of a moral and religious tendency.—*Editor.*

No. XXI.

ON SLANDER.

MINISTERS of the Gospel will often be assailed by the Whisperers, who wish to alienate their minds from envied individuals. There are those *little* minds, who, wishing to monopolize a minister's confidence, cannot bear to see him equally free and happy with any persons *except themselves;* and no sooner do they observe the cordiality of friendship between him and any of his hearers, than the WHISPER is seasonably given.

Thus the Rev. Mr. X. was addressed the other day: "Mr. X., you know my friendship for you is sincere. I observe your growing intimacy with a person, whose name I shall not mention; you are often together, and I hear you are very partial to him. Be on your *guard;* he is not to be *trusted* with secrets; and I assure you, in confidence, as a friend, that he is very *fickle.*" The Minister's answer to the insinuation was worthy of his character and office:—

"I thank you for the kindness intended me, by the caution. I will be on my guard against committing myself, by an imprudent confidence, but equally against unjust suspicions." This answer *affronted* the jealous informer, as she found her whispers had made no impression; and, although too proud to appear hurt, from that time her friendship for the minister diminished.

The lady, however, on telling *another* minister the story, succeeded; for he was a poor, fawning creature, to be *bought* by a *present.* After receiving a favour, he would *flatter* and *cringe,* as his *interest* required; and as he joined the lady in her secret censures, he was considered by her as *secure.* Thus a minister who can speak and be silent, nod or frown, come and go, at this lady's will, is the favourite. I pity the minister whose weakness throws him into the snares of such tyrants.

They wish you to believe, that their attention and favour to the poor minister and his family, is from *piety* and *liberality;* whereas they show him respect, because they despise their *superiors* and *equals;* and expect from *him,* as a principal person in their society, singular homage. I know a lady, whose only claims to attention are her money, and warm profession of religion. Many seem to admire her: these she rewards. She is kind to the poor, who happen to become *favourites;* and two or three are *confidants.* In company with these, she vents her contempt of *money,* and of those that love it, mixed with secret scandal. The poor slaves exclaim—Ah! Madam, I wish all rich persons were like *you.* This feeds her vanity—"she has *their* reward." A wealthy person of *sense* and *education* would

never stoop to such low artifice; and as to *real religion*, it is as opposite to all such proud ostentation, low cunning, sly calumny, and hypocrisy, as light to darkness.

A lady of property and little education, who is very fond of *levelling* her superiors in money and talents, by tracing their *family* up to some mean *original*—on hearing her servant extol the minister who had come too close to her conscience, asked Samuel, if he never heard that the minister's father was only a poor shoemaker; at the same time Samuel knew that her mother kept a day-school! and that the minister's father was a respectable farmer. What *blindness* and *self-delusion* reigns over the soul that delights in censure! "As the north wind driveth away rain, so should a countenance" of disapprobation in all, especially in ministers, "a backbiting tongue!"

Next to the ministers of the gospel, the *deacons* of the church and their *wives*, are warned against being "double tongued, or given to slander." Indeed every person in a Christian society, addicted to secret slander, which is supported and concealed by *duplicity*, in proportion to their *influence*, is a dangerous person.

The deacon who discharges his duty with fidelity to God, to the minister, and the church, is "worthy of double honour." But if he neglects the duties of his offices, or accompanies the discharge of it with scandalous whispers, he will receive, and is worthy of, a double portion of DISGRACE.

But the perfection of slander consists in the concealment of it under the mask of friendship.

The whisperer speaks in a low voice, that gives his lie an air of importance; whilst his *soft* address excites curiosity and gains attention. The hearer thinks the story more likely to be true, as it seems to proceed from tenderness for the reputation of the person, whose character the whisperer is murdering; and when the whisperer adds, "I won't say any more," the impression goes deeper; for you suspect the worst is too bad to be mentioned.

I will illustrate the operation of lurking calumny of this kind. I was one day on a visit, where I heard a female extol a gentleman's attention and kindness; she said he was her only friend and confidant. Paying her another visit soon after, I was surprised and shocked to hear her soft whispers of calumny against this only friend; for speaking of his housekeeper, she said, "I know his weakness, and if there be not too great an intimacy between him and his housekeeper, I am sure it is not his fault." I returned home lost in amazement and grief, knowing the unsuspecting confidence her friend reposed in her. My mind exclaimed, what a world! who can be safe from such secret slander? Whither is friendship fled? Never, no never after this, could I enjoy the society of this slanderer, never trust myself alone in her company, though I was sometimes obliged to *endure* it in the presence of others. I wondered at the patience

of God; but strange to tell, a considerable time after this, I found this very man had forged and whispered scandal against his most intimate friends; and I have reasons to believe, that he had contracted this diabolical habit by his intimacy with the woman who had slandered him. "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

Thus the whisperer "sows discord among brethren" and friends; ministers and their hearers are prejudiced against each other; the man who would lend a sum of money to an honest tradesman, shuts his heart and hand, because the whisperer assures him that the man he would serve, is extravagant, idle, or near bankruptcy. Family discord, disaffection between members of churches, and jealousy between husband and wife are promoted. Tradesmen lose their customers, and servants their places. Young persons engaged to each other are alienated, and, in a word, "the whisperer separateth chief friends."

What can rouse the indignation of upright minds like, slanderous whispers against a person for whom the slanderer professes friendship.

The double-tongue speaks to you with "a creamy smoothness," whilst the restless whisperer "fumbles for his brains,"—hesitates,—hopes you will not mention it, and then with pestilential breath, whispers the slander.

He may affectpiety, and add—"you know me too well to suppose for a moment, that I would forge the story, exaggerate it, or believe it without the strongest evidence." Thus this false friend endorses a bad note.—

> Their piety a system of deceit,
> Scripture employ'd to sanctify the cheat;
> In smooth dissimulation skill'd, to grace
> A devil's purpose, with an angel's face.

Secret scandal is often concealed by affected hatred of it, and a careless or partial liberality to the poor. Know you no female whom the following lines describe?—

> "Flavia, most tender of her own good name,
> Is rather careless of a sister's fame;
> Her superfluity the poor supplies,
> But if she *touch* a *character*,—it dies."

I have known such a lady so tortured by hearing another person praised for their liberality, that she has instantly slandered their *motives*, and told an old story against their characters.

> Her scandal has new minted an old lie,
> Or taxed invention for a fresh supply.

A secret slanderer is artful, for slander is a work of darkness, and the author of it is tremblingly anxious for *concealment*. "He hates the light" of truth, "because his deed is evil." By such cruel cunning

he will lodge the black scandal in a mind prepared to receive it; and seek a union of spirit with such persons, in the bond of ill-will. Nor is the sly assassin wanting in attention to TIME; but watches and improves the opportunity, when any circumstance occurs to give the *appearance* of *probability* to the insinuation. The manner of conveying the lie, bears the same character of artifice, by demanding of the person to whom it is related, the *closest secrecy*, with the assurance that it has never been mentioned to any *other* person; that they are tenderly concerned for the person they injure; and would not mention it even now, if they thought it would ever go any farther. Should, however, the slanderer suspect that his secret will come out, he will feel his ground, and deal in broad *hints* and *intimations* of what he *could* reveal, if he were so disposed.

But the perfection of this black art, consists in retaining the appearances and professions of *friendship* or good-will to a person's *face*, at the very time they are "shooting at him in secret" the envenomed arrows of slander.

The criminality of slander is singularly aggravating. It is *falsehood*, *deceit*, and *lying*. It is *injustice* of the worst kind. It is contrary to *love*, to *truth* and *friendship*. It is hatred itself: for what can prove hatred, if slander does not?—"A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it."

The skulking slanderer bears false witness against his neighbour. He is worse than a highwayman, who robs you of *money*, which may be *restored*, or the loss repaired; but the slanderer steals your "good name, which is rather to be chosen than riches;" and your *friends*, your *peace*, your *usefulness*, which are "rather to be chosen than silver and gold!"

The *causes* of secret calumny mark its criminality. The first is *envy*, which looks with a malignant eye on any person whose misfortune it is to be *praised* as *handsome*, *sensible*, or *well-educated*; as *prosperous*, *popular*, *prudent*, or possessed of distinguished *gifts*; and sickening at the mention of any excellence in another, in which the slanderer may be supposed inferior, he endeavours to cloud it by some detraction.

Fear of being justly exposed by the faithfulness of any person, will induce the little mind of the whisperers to slander the *motives* and character of the person whose fidelity they dread. Slander is their shield.

Covetousness slanders the minister from whom it withholds due support, as a justification of its selfishness; and belies the tradesman whose fair dealing and numerous customers it cannot imitate.

Jealousy backbites its rival. The *guilty* defames the honest soul, from which it dreads detection; and *prejudice* blackens the good actions of those it wishes to degrade.

It is sometimes seen, that a man or woman will secretly slander the person with whom they have been in habits of friendship for

twenty years. Why? Because he has *reproved* them—their *pride* is strong—they are afraid openly to resent it, and conceal the true motive by assigning a false one.

The sin of *hypocrisy* is an ingredient in this "deadly poison," for the most fatal slanders are told under the *cloke of friendship!* Thus one near relation, a member of the same church or congregation, will "speak against their own brother, and slander their own mother's son." The secret slanderer is a *cowardly* assassin, who pierces you in the *dark*, and does the mischief before you know it was intended. "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword," Prov. xii. 18. The whisperer's tongue is that sword. How harmless was Shimei's conduct, who openly railed at David, cursing him as he passed along, compared with that which "PRIVILY slanders a neighbour!"

One of the names of that being who slanders God to man, man to God, and one man to another, is Diabolus—A SLANDERER. The sin therefore is diabolical, and a disposition to indulge it characterises "the children of the wicked one."

This sin excludes a person from the heavenly kingdom. It is classed with the foulest crimes. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Rev. xxi. 27. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor *revilers*, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

"Not the *malicious* or profane,
The sensual or the proud,
Nor thieves nor SLANDERERS shall obtain
The kingdom of our God."

No. XXII.

ON THE MORAL EXCELLENCES OF THE YOUTHFUL JESUS.

MORAL excellence is peculiar to rational beings, and is distinguishable from excellences merely intellectual and corporal. A person with an enlarged understanding, a strong memory, and a handsome face, if destitute of good qualities of the heart and life, becomes the more odious to God, and dangerous to society. Should he aim at merely external conformity to the moral law, he is but an hypocrite.

God is the great original and standard of moral excellence, or holiness, which is the combination of all moral excellence; and Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. "In him was no sin—he was holy." He "loved righteousness and hated ini-

quity." By the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, he was born without sin; as the Angel, addressing Mary, called him—"That HOLY offspring which shall be born of thee." His childhood was marked by filial subjection to his parents, and ardent devotion to God. At twelve years of age, "he enquired in the Temple," which he called "his Father's house," in such a manner, as "to astonish all that heard him, with his understanding and his answers." The Evangelist says—"The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom."

This lovely child was *inquisitive* after, and diligent in the pursuit of divine knowledge. His first visit to the temple, exhibited him sitting at the feet of the public teachers, thirsting for divine instruction, attentively hearing them; and, with teachableness of spirit, "asking them questions."

Such love to God, to his house and ordinances—such diligent inquiries in a spirit becoming his years, accompanied with such filial respect and obedience, render this "child, to us given," worthy the name of "the wonderful." Nay, the children which attend the House of God, learn at once to admire and imitate him.

From twelve to thirty years of age, he lived a private character. "As he increased in stature, he advanced in wisdom, and in favour with God and man."—Luke ii. 40. This implies, that in his private life, his temper and behaviour were such as engaged the affection of those who best knew him; and that he enjoyed repeated tokens of the divine favour.

The reputed father of Jesus was a carpenter, and it is very probable that Jesus learned the trade, and laboured with him, "obtaining his bread by the sweat of his brow." The Jews had a maxim, that he who did not teach his son some useful trade, it was the same as teaching him to be a thief. Even some of their great doctors were mechanics. And considering the poverty of Joseph, the reproach attached to an idle youth, the growing reputation of Jesus in his youth, and his being called by his enemies the carpenter's son, and *the carpenter;* we may presume that he followed that employment with honest industry.

Temperance and moderation, submission and contentment, cherished by the highest enjoyments and devotional exercises, were sufficiently apparent to ensure the esteem of those who had an opportunity of knowing his real character.—"He grew in favour with man." He accommodated himself to the humble and private station in which God had placed him, fulfilling its offices with integrity and diligence, till "he began to be about thirty years of age." Born in a fallen world, and surrounded by the worst of examples, he was "undefiled and separate from sinners."

How can we account for this pre-eminence of character? Why was he, in this respect, "fairer than the children of men?"

Two causes are assigned for this distinction from "all who have

sinned and come short of the glory of God." The first is his miraculous birth of a virgin, by the overshadowing and power of the Holy Ghost;" which secured him from defilement and sin.

The second cause, the Prophet and Evangelist record, is the *continued influences* of the Holy Spirit. The Prophet says—"The spirit of Jehovah shall *rest* upon him, to make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." The Evangelist, marking his singular progress in intellectual and moral excellence, says—"The grace of God was upon him."

"From a child he knew the Holy Scriptures;" and under the innocent infirmities of human nature, the labours and discomforts of poverty, by reading, meditation and prayer, accompanied by the influences of divine grace, he became "strong in spirit and was filled with wisdom." Blessed Jesus!—"Many in childhood, youth, and maturer age, have done virtuously; but thou excellest them all." Some are lovely in a few things—others in many; but thou in "the beauties of holiness, art altogether lovely!"

With that perfection of character, and those extraordinary talents for which Jesus Christ was distinguished, he never forced himself into any public office. When he was about thirty years of age, he was directed from Galilee to Jordan, to request John to baptize him. Conscious of his superior dignity, the Baptist at first hesitated, but his objection was removed, and Jesus was baptized; and he was marked out by three extraordinary tokens of divine approbation. The heavens opened, the spirit descended upon him with a visible representation in the form of a dove, gradually hovering over, until it rested upon him. His heavenly Father's voice was distinctly heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." From this period he sustained a public character, which was immediately tried by painful temptations, and supported by the exercise of those principles which formed a rich assemblage of moral excellences. The first which was eminently apparent, and by which he quenched "the fiery darts of the devil," was faith in the Word of God.

No. XXIII.

THE AGENCY OF SATAN, AS REFERRED TO IN THE BOOK OF JOB.

THIS part of the book of Job, which relates to the agency of Satan, has been considered by some men of eminence for theological learning, as a literal history; and by others of equal eminence, as a piece of allegorical scenery, under which are veiled the most interesting instruction; or a paraborical representation of the divine Providence.

The imagery is natural, and the whole contains a representation of those sentiments, passions, arguments, and manners, which might in such a situation be expected from the different speakers.

The reasons for preferring the parabolical to the literal sense, which have been thought conclusive, are:—

1. The apparent inconsistency of such a *formal* order, or permission, of that evil genius to do mischief, with the divine glory.

2. That Satan should be admitted into the divine presence, to request the gratification of his cruel malice.

3. It is the less probable that an appointed time, a *certain day*, should have been appointed for such a strange meeting.

4. Add to which, the condition of fallen angels.—2 Pet. ii., 4. God spared them not, cast them down into hell, reserves them in chains of darkness, unto judgment. Neither is there place found for them any more in heaven.—Rev. xii., 7—9.

This manner of conveying truth attracts by the pleasure it affords; strikes the mind more forcibly—is more easily understood, and better retained, than abstract sentiments. Witness the story of the good Samaritan, and the affecting parable of Dives and Lazarus

Having marked the *rule* of interpretation, we may offer a few remarks, explanatory of the different agents which take a part in the afflictive dispensation.

The first is *Job*—an illustrious character for godliness, and every moral excellence. He obtained from his Maker the honourable testimony, that "he feared God and hated evil;" and, that "there was none like him in the earth."

The united testimony of the Prophet Ezekiel, and the Apostle James, proves that he was a real person, and not an imaginary character.—Ezk. xiv., 14; Jam. v., 14,

The "sons of God presenting themselves before him," may be the professed worshippers of the true God.—Gen. vi., 2.

Such, in Seth's time, are mentioned as assembling to call on the name of the Lord.—Gen. iv. 26.

These sons of God, some of whom were sons by adopting and

regenerating grace, are annoyed by Satan; who comes also amongst them, to distract their minds, and deprive them of the advantages of public worship.—Mat. xiii.

But it is more probable, that the holy angels are designed by the sons of God, those morning stars, who shouted and sang together on the creation of our world.—Job xxxviii., 7.

This title is expressive of their creation in the likeness of God: their filial and affectionate obedience to him, their happiness in his paternal favour, and their gratitude for such honourable distinction, induces them to present themselves before him, prepared for his service, and waiting for the instructions of his will.—Heb i., 14; Ps. ciii., 20—22.

The third agent is an evil being, called Satan, which signifies an adversary. This being is the same as, by the agency of a serpent, seduced Eve in Paradise; and is described as "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan." To denote his powerful influence, he is called the prince of the devils, the prince of this world, the God of the world.

This evil one is represented as "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it," to denote his activity and vigilance in every part of the earth, to seduce and accuse.

This Hebrew idiom is said to mean, the vigilant execution of an office, or a ministry.

He is also represented as coming into the assemblies of the sons of God, when they present themselves before him as his worshippers.

This may intimate his activity in tempting and distressing the children of God, amongst the sons of Adam, in their solemn assemblies; or "transforming himself into an angel of light;" that is, endeavouring to *appear* one, may intrude into the presence of the holy angels on earth, to obtain some advantage against the saints, by opposing the ministry of these heavenly friends. We may derive important instruction from this representation.

1. That God governs the world by the instrumentality of second causes.

2. That the evils of life are under his direction; and that the afflictions of good men are appointed by him, for the illustration and improvement of their characters, and for the advancing, by that means, the honour of real godliness.

Great grace is manifested and improved by great trials: the reality, the power, the progress of it, then become more visible, as the shades of Job's illustrious character become stronger, when we behold him in the depths of adversity.

The Lord permits Satan to try his people, by withdrawing his restraints; but he also limits the degree and the period of the trial, and directs it to a favourable termination.—Jam. v., 11.

This is illustrated by the instance before us. The Lord is represented as watching the motions and designs of fallen angels, di-

rected against his people, calling Satan to account; and by the question, "Whence comest thou?" expresses at once his observance of his movements, and his disapprobation of his designs, as 1 Kings, xix., 9.

3. How much we are indebted to the grace and providence of God, Satan desires permission to afflict.—Job i., 11.

He does as much mischief as possible to good men.

To their *property*.—Job i., 13—20.

Their *bodies*.—Job ii., 7.

Their *souls*.—Job ii., 9.

He desired to have "Peter to sift him as wheat." He desired to have Job in his power. He is therefore said to "move God against him," by his accusations; "to destroy him." Not that he *could* do it, but he *desired* it.

Let us then admire that Providence which is as "a *hedge* about *us*, and about *all* that we have on *every* side, and which blesses the work of our hands;" and that grace, by which souls are shielded from the fiery darts of the wicked one.

We may consider the Lord speaking to Satan, and his answering the Lord, as what passed in *effect* rather than words. As the wicked speak by their actions, Ps. xii., 4; and do in *effect* say, what they do not speak in so many words.

So, when the Lord promises to dwell in his people, it is in effect saying, "they are the temples of the Holy Ghost."

And as Satan may be considered as speaking the language of envy, of enmity, of calumny, and cruelty, in his opposition to the saints, and to Job in particular; so the blessed God may be considered as in effect, speaking to Satan, by those actions of his providence and gracious operations of his spirit, in which he vindicates the character of his people, renders them victorious and steadfast in temptation, patient in affliction, persevering in duty; and proves the reality, strength, and progress of their grace, by those very trials which threatened to overwhelm them.

No. XXIV.

FICKLENESS OF RELIGIOUS PROFESSORS.

INSTABILITY of conduct implies an instability of principle, or the absence of it. This is manifest in those professors of religion, who are, *first*, avowed friends of the Established Church; then, if you believe them, they become Dissenters, and wonder any thinking man can be a member of the Established Church. In a few years they are again Dissenters, soon discover their error, and join Lady Hun-

tingdon's connexion. They then leave this society, and return again to the Church or some class of Dissenters.

So long as any of these communities will admit them, they join one or the other; but if their character becomes suspected by all parties, or they should lose their confidence in themselves, and suspect that they are *known*, they withdraw, and walk at liberty among the nondescripts of the day.

What are the *causes* which produce these changes? They cannot be the absence of the *Gospel* from the Established Church; for many leave the church where the Gospel is preached. Nor can it be the want of *discipline* among the Dissenters; for this fickleness is apparent where the genuine Gospel is preached, and a strict attention to discipline maintained.

To ascertain the causes of such conduct, I shall appeal to *facts*, which have come within my own knowledge in the course of forty years.

The first cause I shall name is, *the love of some sin*, under a profession of religion. I asked an old professor, who was sound in sentiment, a great admirer of the thirty-nine articles, why he left the Church? He answered—"Because I have heard a clergyman for two years, who so preached Christ, as to leave my conscience quiet whilst I lived in fornication! I attended a second clergyman, who disgusted me by preaching a system of morality without Christ as its foundation. I tried a third, who preached Christ in his atonement, his spirit and example, so as to make me miserable in my sin. Finding I must leave my sin or his ministry, I chose the latter!"

What course do you now follow? I inquired.

"For some time I went where I pleased; and at last joined a Dissenting Church where I was not known; assuring the minister I was weary of the cold formality of the Established Church. After I had settled among them for some time, I found their reproofs, censures, and watchfulness over me too strict, and I again returned to the Church. I was unhappy with the Dissenters, and they with me, and I left them." In this state he died.

A second cause of their "moveable ways" is *the love of power*. "The clergyman," said one of these ever varying professors, "has all the power, whether he be an Arminian, a Socinian, or a Calvinist. He is the only figure, I am a mere cypher." Leaving the Church, after a considerable time, he professed himself on principle, a Dissenter.

After enjoying his vote among them for some time, he wished to become a *deacon*. The church being already supplied with three deacons, there was no room for him. This rendering him restless in himself, and troublesome to the church, he soon withdrew. Abhorring what he termed "the tyranny of the Church of England," and the discipline of the Dissenters, he determined to be *free*.

The love of power sometimes becomes "a root of bitterness" in a Dissenting Church. One pants for the deacon's office: and a second thinks he ought to be sent out to preach, and wishes to exercise his gifts at the prayer-meetings. If these dispositions should not be encouraged, and especially if opposed by the church and the minister, offended pride excites swellings, cavelling at the sermons, censures of imaginary faults in the church and minister. Disaffection occasions distance and backbiting, and these frequently end in suspension, separation, or the withdrawment of the discontented.

Leaving the independent church, they endeavour to form a new party; and if this fails, they join another congregation in the neighbourhood, if there be one, where their consequence may be promoted.

A third cause of instability of conduct, is *worldly interest.*—"The love of money" leads many from one community of professing Christians to another, as may, in their own apprehension, best advance worldly prosperity. Thus one partner in trade misleads another; and a mercenary prospect of marriage will lead an unstable young man or woman from one society of Christians to another, in forming that important relation.

A fourth cause, is *worldly prosperity.*—This often nourishes pride and bad passions, and prepares the mind to receive the attention and flattery of worldly minded professors, who draw off the heart from the ordinances of God, by expensive dinners, and parties of pleasure, which melt down the mind, and form it by the mould of "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." I have seen the *gentleman*, regular in his attendance at the dissenting meeting, deeply impressed with the Gospel of Salvation, which he constantly heard, and warmly attached to the preacher's character as a Christian minister, and to his principles as a dissenter. This gentleman, on rising into the notice of the world by office or title, has instantly left the dissenting meeting, and returned to the church—a distinguished bigot.

I have seen grandeur yield to the lower branch of the middle class of society; and from a coach and four, in fashionable parade in the world and in the church, reduced to comparative poverty, and attending with hearts of affectionate gratitude, the Word of God, as the only source of consolation.

Ah! exclaimed a lady, whose heart first became attached to the Dissenters in her neighbourhood, from the influence of the Gospel in relieving her distressed mind, what would the dead body of mere morals, which I have heard at church, do for me now? She preferred the *simplicity* of the dissenting *discipline*, as she termed it, to the *lax discipline*, or, as she said, the *no discipline* of the church, in which she had been "brought up."

But prosperity suddenly returned with its thousands a-year; the rich and the gay showed her great attention; she gradually with-

drew from the society which was her asylnm in adversity, and returned to *the Church*, in the style of fashion.

A fifth cause of instability of conduct, particularly among the Dissenters, is an aversion to the *discipline* they exercise. If a member becomes immoral, they reprove him privately for private offences, and publicly for public ones. If reproof fails of its effect, they may suspend him from their communion. If he repents, they restore him to his privileges; but if he obstinately vindicates his sin, they separate him. This is apostolic order, "Put away from you that evil person."

This is, indeed, a trial of the faith of the Church, in exercising discipline "without partiality and without hypocrisy;" for they are called on by imperious duty to expel the rich and the liberal sinner. I do not confine this to the Independents; for the same cause will produce the same effect in other societies. A married man, in Lady Huntington's connection, was called before the society, for taking criminal liberties with a single woman. He refused to meet them, and went to Church. Removing to another place, he joined the Independents, and professed himself a Dissenter. The lust of the flesh again revealed him, and he was expelled. He left them, and again joined a society in her ladyship's connection, declaring his dislike to the discipline of the Dissenters, which he called "trammels." A second was expelled from an independent society for lying; and a third was suspended for the most flagrant acts of injustice. They manifested their impenitence by continuing incorrigible, by the most scandalous slanders poured on the church and minister, and soon after libelled the independent dissenters, as arbitrary and severe. They soon joined a society where their lust of power was gratified, by being made members of a *committee*, which governed the society and its ministers. They readily voted in exercising discipline among the dissenters—in reproving and expelling *other* persons; but disapproved of its discipline, when it was justly directed against *themselves*. The society adapted to their criminal liberty is one where they can be in office, give out the hymns, control the ministers, and be above control themselves. Let them gratify their particular sins and the lust of power, and you ensure their liberality and activity in their society. One of them observed, that a frequent change of ministers prevented too minute an acquaintance with individuals: A second remarked, that the use of the forms of prayer skreened them from much persecution: A third intimated, that when the church was not controlled by any minister, one minister had no more power than another; and left the interest of the church to the committee, as managers of all its concerns. This may be illustrated by the following fact:—Three females applied to one of the ministers for a ticket of admission to the sacrament. He proposed a time to converse with them. The eldest answered, we are not come to be catechised; if the Rev. Mr. —— was here, he would give us

tickets in the time he would take to buckle his shoes. This may be true, replied the minister; but he can feel no interest in the purity of the church, the good of your souls, nor the honour of Christ. He may rapidly increase the number of its members, half of which may prove hypocrites. "Those, you admit, may prove hypocrites," the eldest rejoined. True, said the faithful minister; but that will not be my fault, if I do all I can to prevent it. They left him with heavy censures of his bigotry, and never after applied for admission.

No. XXV.

ON LIBERALITY.

THE monuments of British liberality are numerous; and whatever principle actuates the public to apparent generosity, the distressed are consoled, and the needy supplied. No doubt the influence of example, interest, reputation, the emulation of party spirit and self-righteousness, have no small share in the origin and support of public charities. "I have this night made my will," said a rich oppressor, in my hearing, "and I hope this charity will cover the multitude of my sins." This was founded in two mistakes: First, our "charity or love covers the sins" of OTHERS *against* US; but not OUR SINS AGAINST GOD. Secondly, to suppose that our charity or alms will cover, that is, *atone* for our sins, is to substitute the merit of human works for the merits of the SAVIOUR; or to suppose that our charity has any influence in procuring our pardon, is a denial of the all-sufficiency and perfection of the atonement of the Redeemer; and is a relic of popery, as really as the doctrine of purgatory, which adds the sufferings of man, in a future world, to the sufferings of Christ in this world. To complete his work altogether, he triumphantly declared, "It is finished!"

"*Pride* has erected hospitals as well as *religion*; and compassion to the distressed has no inseparable connection with the fear or love of God. Heathen nations are not destitute of *humanity*; they are *men*, although not *Christians*. In England, the prince annually extends his bounty to the necessitous, with a royal munificence; and the poor in every city or town are indulged with a particular protector." Thousands and tens of thousands in this country, both male and female, whose characters are distinguished by infidelity, profaneness, and lewdness, will part with their *money*, but not with their SINS; they hope to propitiate God, by what they call charity to men. If this is religion, the righteousness of a *heathen* may "exceed the righteousness of these pharisees." The alms of the Emperor of China, every year, *exceed four millions!* In all the

towns and cities of China, *a Pagan empire*, there is a number of the poor maintained at the emperor's cost—*one hundred* in some, *sixty* in others, according to the population of the place. (*Navarette*, p. 27).—This is humanity, compassion, or charity in *Pagans*.

Thousands in this christian land are liberal of the property of others, because they are not *just* in paying their *debts*—*Liberal*, yet not just in the wages of their workmen—Liberal, yet oppress the industrious and honest tradesman, by "bating down his fair price," and keeping him a long time from payment—*Liberal*, yet becoming *rich* by *bankruptcy*—Liberal, indiscriminately to the dishonest, the idle, and the lewd, to procure their good word—*Liberal*, to the fraudulent, the drunkard, and the poacher, because they have "consented to the theft," are intemperate themselves, and are committed by purchasing game at a low price—*Liberal*, in building places of worship to form a party, obtain power, and purchase flattery of a preacher of "smooth things," who preaches discipline without particular duties; and the bood of Christ to comfort those who LIVE IN THEIR SINS!!

No. XXVI.

ON RELIGIOUS "CANT."

Religious cant is truly disgusting to every class of society. It is an affectation of piety, with a soft whining tone. It is *hypocrisy*, covered by pretensions of devotion in the face and voice; but, generally, such canting is perceived in such persons in *civil* society as well as in *religious*.

Canting is not confined to *hypocrites* in *religion*. There are *canting* physicians and apothecaries; *canting* lawyers and tradesmen; *canting* gentlemen and ladies—the rich and poor—the scholar and the dunce—the master, mistress, and servant, may be *canters*: yea, some *preachers* are guilty of the most disgusting whine in *voice* and *servility* in *manners*, and receive from many *hearers*, who despise religion, praise for their excellent sermons—and praise conveyed in the forms of the most *canting politeness*. And so general is this sickening attempt to please others, and commend themselves, that some of my plain neighbours complain that even their *barber* is the greatest *cant* in the town.

And it not unfrequently happens, that those who are most forward to accuse others of *canting*, are the most guilty of it themselves, and the greatest strangers to vital and experimental religion, under the *cant* of its profession and forms. They appear disgusted with hypocrisy, affect great sincerity, and boast of not pretending to more

religion than their neighbours, while their conduct and conversation prove they are "ashamed of Christ before men," and, as "men of the world," seek acceptance with men of the world. Our Lord remarks, that "the world will love its own" persons of their own taste, opinions, and customs; and he adds, "Marvel not, if the world hate YOU," my disciple; "It hated ME, before it hated you; because I testify of it, that its works are evil."

It is not *hypocrisy* these men hate, but *spiritual, vital, experimental religion.* And these REAL hypocrites cover their enmity by giving real religion the *name* of *cant.*

Admitting, however, that *canting*, that is, *hypocrisy*, exists in some among all ranks, professions, and trades, it does not follow that *all* of each class are hypocrites. How great then must be that person's enmity to real religion, who stamps the name of *canting*, or hypocrisy, on a whole body of Christians, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, because *some*, like Judas, betray their Lord and his cause! "The gall of bitterness" must be in their hearts, and "the poison of asps under their lips." I know Dissenters, without any *principle*, will *cant*, and cut, and trim to Churchmen, because they are hypocrites in the esteem of Dissenters; and I know some *canting* Churchmen, who boast of their zealous attachment to the Church of England, whose *tempers, conversation*, and *conduct*, prove they are enemies to *the Church of* CHRIST.

They go to church from worldly motives—are taught not to take the name of God in vain—to remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy—not to bear false witness against their neighbours—to keep their tongues from lying and slandering; and, after each command, begin *canting*, "Lord have mercy upon us, incline our hearts to keep this law." And, to shew their hypocrisy, swear, slander their neighbours, and profane the Sabbath-day, by worldly business and pleasure, by idleness, and unprofitable habits and conversation; by paying or receiving visits, to eat, drink, indulge in levity, and *kill time!*

No. XXVII.

A COVETOUS DISPOSITION.

WHAT are the marks of a covetous disposition?

A man is then covetous, when he grudges himself conveniences suitable to his condition.

When he is not liberal in proportion to his property.

When a man violates truth, justice, or conscience, for the sake of money. Such a person, whatever his profession, prefers money to his soul.

When he is tormented at any worldly disappointment or loss.

When his heart rests on his wealth, as his distinction, his happiness. He thinks and talks of money with complacency.

When he is proud of his property, and despises others for the want of it.

When he is discontented, and anxious for more, although he has a sufficiency.

When he buys, he undervalues the goods by falsehood; and when he sells the same goods, he with equal falsehood magnifies them far above their value. Whatever he gains, it enlarges his covetous desires; and to his taste, "enough is a little more than he has."

He flatters the rich, to over-reach them; and takes advantage of the poor, who are in his debt, and want ready-money.

He envies those who prosper; and will undersell them to destroy their trade, as far as his influence will reach.

If to cover his injustice and oppression, he *gives* to the needy,—he boasts of his charity, represents himself as the first mover in liberality; and evidently repents that he gave more than his share.

Some of this covetous class half-starve their *cattle;* others feed their cattle and oppress their servants, by requiring them to work from fourteen to eighteen hours a day; and bribe their consciences by giving their poor servant, or slave, a little beer. And after the devotional compliment to God, in "bodily service" on the Sabbath, require their poor men to come to receive orders for the work of Monday. And as if their banker did not need the rest of body or mind, they will finish their hypocritical devotions on the Sabbath, by disturbing the banker for money in the evening of the Sabbath.

They *talk* much of *God's Providence*, but trust only their *own*.

They slander the fair tradesman, as guilty of high charges; and oppress the poor tradesman by hard bargains.

They inform the poor that small beer is better for them than ale; and water better than either: but ale and wine and spirits are best for them; for this best agrees with good eating, and their circumstances, as gentlemen.

Thousands of men in the world, are humane in their feelings, just in their dealings, moral in their conduct and conversation, without any religion. Is it any wonder they should form a false opinion of religion itself, from the abominable dispositions, conversation, and conduct of such blind, conceited, boasting, self-applauding knaves, who, like Judas "kiss the Saviour, and betray him and his cause?"

No. XXVIII.

CHURCHES.

ALL men have a right to think for themselves: but not a right to persecute, to silence, and crush the friends of truth and freedom.

The church of Christ is catholic. It is not confined to one sect; confers no civil rewards, inflicts no civil punishments. The causes of uniting Church and State in the fourth century, were *ignorance* of the nature of Christ's kingdom—*fear* of persecution—lust of power to retaliate—pride of understanding—dictating creeds which others must believe.

A Roman emperor becomes head of the state and of the church, and ordains officers to support his power: then see "the beast with seven heads and ten horns." All who thought for themselves were heretics—guilty of schism, or divisions—exposed to persecution; that is, exile, torture, death. Hence the Roman pontiff—the anti-christian power—the reign of popery.

The Reformation constituted the king—a Protestant king—the head of the church, and continued the alliance of Church and State, contrary to the simple and apostolic pattern. Matt. xx., xxv., xxvi.

Constantine, in the fourth century, authorised his church officers, in meetings called councils, to forge creeds and canons, which he imposed, under civil and spiritual penalties. Here mark the germ of Popery: the assumption of a sovereign dictatorial authority over conscience.

Is there any thing in the constitution of the primitive churches like this? Were even the *apostles* lords? Had not they, with every member of the church, "one Lord?" But Constantine was *another* lord, and gave laws to the kingdom of Christ. Every article of faith was settled by the emperor's influence, in every particular council, and was stamped by his authority.

Let Cæsar govern in civil affairs; but *consciences* and *souls* are not his subjects. Human authority has united Popery and Protestantism with the state. Does Christ's authority change with them? One human establishment has been changed in its creed and discipline, by a new king or queen. They prevail against each other. Is this the Established "Church against which the gates of HELL shall not prevail?" Are princes, courtiers, legislators, *capable* of estimating religious principles? Has God given them authority to dictate articles of faith and discipline?

The kingdom of Christ continued distinct in its constitution, laws and ordinances, from the kingdoms of this world, three hundred years after its first establishment. Jesus Christ says, "My kingdom is not of this world."

The church of Christ has one "lawgiver," only; one law;—"the

law of Christ [illegible] the sacred scriptures. But are there not many good men now in the Church of England? Yes; and in the established Church of Rome. They subsist in these political churches, as grains of gold in water, altogether unmixed.

National churches originated in human wisdom; the church of Christ in the wisdom of God. The *national* church has been Protestant, Popish, Orthodox, Arian.

The national Church of Rome has the Pope for its head, and his dictates for its foundation. The established Church of England is built on an act of parliament. The church of Christ is "built on the doctrines of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone."

What is the effect on the majority of the clergy? They swear to them to be of articles and liturgy, which they contradict in the pulpit. Some are Calvinists, others Arminians, and many Antinomians. They declare all regenerated who are baptized; and all they bury, with a sure and certain hope of their resurrection to eternal life! Well may Infidels increase, and Deists laugh. Well may Dissenters multiply, and occasion officers in the Established Church to sound an alarm, "The church is in danger!" that is, their emoluments are.

Dissenting ministers, who have nothing to depend on but character and talent, were struck, "but we," said a clergyman, "are all [illegible] our creed and prayers are fixed by act of parliament. [illegible] Why are the

ssembly of whoremongers, drunkards, swearers, sabbath-
ıt the Lord's table, " the communion of SAINTS," or holy

ns, in national churches, have no right to choose their
ers: these are *imposed* on them by worldly men, however
frivolous, worldly minded and profane. If it so happen
se and holy minister has served a congregation, the next
nere fop, a sensualist, or a mere gamester. It is not the
Christ which ordains these worldly ministers; but the
' England, united to the state. This obliges them, and
rs to take the Lord's Supper; and the sensual minister to
ıt he is moved by the Holy Ghost to take the sacred office.
ng to God and man. By the constitutional alliance of
d state, the worst of men, admitted to civil offices, at
abroad, must take the Lord's Supper as a test; and be
he body and blood of Christ. This, says the Rev. Mr.
' is a national curse."
on of the primitive church, was by one spirit; the Roman
ıd a *political* union under a political head. Was this a
ır secular kingdom, or " Mystery, Babylon?" Hence,
nour, power, persecution, imprisonment, death to Chris-
ıdhering to " the simplicity" of Christian truth and dis-

gay attire to ministers, garnished temples, statues, images,
aints, of apostles, of the Virgin Mary, of angels, of Jesus
d of the Father.
ırch and state united by the same authority, decided at
that Jesus Christ was God; at another, that he was not.
e of civil government is, to protect our natural, civil, and
ights; not to invade these rights, and fetter conscience by
ɔlicy.
have been establshed by human authority, without *convic-*
ıgainst it. Great men plead for respect to the national creed
ıtions; not because they are established by divine autho-
by an *act of parliament*—by the law of man. This is
the authority of Christ; and the emperor, king, or civil
says, " The people shall be willing in the day of MY
Psalms, cx., 3.
equity? Suppose the power in the hands of dissenters.
ould they should do to you, do ye to them."
ot Jesus, his apostles, and the martyrs, dissenters from the
ıd Religion? What then avails the title of NATIONAL

ey infallible? if not, how can they convince the under-
and bind the conscience? Do they establish uniformity
mong their own members? No; but on the contrary,
y and hypocrisy.

No. XXIX.

THE MILLENNIUM.

It has been, and still is the sentiment of many good and learned men, that the Millennium, or thousand years, in which the influence of Satan will be restrained, and the world filled with eminent or perfect Christians, refers to the personal and visible reign of Jesus Christ on the earth, during that period.

Dr. Gill and others, thus describe it. The former says, after the world is burned, the living saints changed, and the dead ones raised, Christ will personally appear, and visibly reign a thousand years; after which, the wicked will be raised, and the general judgment immediately succeed the resurrection. The passage on which these sentiments are built, is Rev. xx. 1—6, which is capable of another meaning, which I think is more consistent with the passage itself, and the general tenor of the sacred Scripture.

A valuable design may be answered, and numerous and weighty objections to the Millennium obviated, by understanding it as referring not to a personal and visible, but to a *spiritual* reign; or a dispensation of the Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces, answerable to the prophetic descriptions; "I will pour out my *spirit* upon all flesh." Joel, ii., 28, 29. Pentecost was but the first fruits of this harvest.

This will restore the Jews, and express the permanent favour of God to them, in a manner never yet experienced: as Ezekiel declares, "Neither will I hide my face *any more* from them; for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord." Ezekiel, xxxix., 29.

The effects produced in the spirits and lives of men, will correspond to this glorious *cause*; as knowledge and piety, love and union, order and happiness.

1. Knowledge.—Satan being bound, he will not "*deceive* the nation." Errors and delusions, the causes of ignorance, and the impediment to progressive knowledge, will then be removed; "the veil over all faces, and the covering on all nations will be taken off.—Isaiah, xxv. 7.

This knowledge is represented metaphorically, as a seven-fold degree of it, compared to former times, (Isaiah xxx., 26.), "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun," &c. There shall be no more old infants, or an infant of days; or old men infants in knowledge; "Nor an old man that hath not filled his days," that is, improved according to his years. "For the child shall die, an hundred years old." That is children in years, shall then surpass in knowledge, the oldest men of former days.

2. Eminent purity will abound.—Thy people shall be all righ-

teous. (Isaiah lx. 21.) This consecration to God will be expressed in their common business and temporal enjoyments. In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord. (Zech. xiv., 20, 21.)

3. Pure and ardent love of God.—Their own souls and the souls of others will be equally conspicuous in its effects. (Jer. xxxi. 33.) In that day the divine law, the substance of which is love, will be deeply engraven in every heart, and will appear in the—

4. Union.—When God shall gather his people out of all countries; he will give them one heart, and one way. (Jer. xxxii. 37—41.)

Union of *hearts*, as well as of *Judgments*, will then be produced by the Holy Spirit, as in primitive times; when, under the same influence, the disciples continued *with one mind*, of one heart, and of one soul. (Acts, ii., 46; iv., 32.)

5. Order,—is the result of union; persons and things in their proper places and seasons. The spirit of God governing the spirits of men, will produce a wise, holy, and cordial subordination in families, churches, and kingdoms.

6. From these dispositions and principles, spring peace and joy. —The effect of these is peace. (Isaiah, xxxii., 18.) The sinful lusts and passions subdued, the causes of war and contention; harmony and felicity will be enjoyed. (Isaiah, ii. 4.) In the church there will be a feast of fat things, and wine on the lees well refined, then will be accomplished. (Isaiah, xi. 6—9.)

Eminent holiness and happiness will be followed by permanent health of body. Their sins pardoned, enjoying an exemption from temporal judgments, "The inhabitants will not say I am sick; the people who live in that time shall be forgiven their iniquity. (Isaiah, xxxiii. 24.)

No. XXX.

ON PREACHING.

It has been said, that the primary object of the preacher is, to instruct, to convince, and to persuade. Not to commend himself to the taste and fancy; but to "the *conscience* of every man, as in the sight of God." If you preach as in the sight of man, only, your aim will be to *please* a few persons of taste, or to please many of low taste;—or to shine before men, and obtain their applause.

Without a sincere desire to enlighten and impress "the poor,"—our style may become to them, "an unknown tongue." If a preacher shall aim at displaying of fine thoughts, fine words, and fine periods;—use "the enticing words of man's wisdom," to play the

orator—he preaches HIMSELF; and is of all triflers, the most eminent. A person in a *private* station may trifle with his own soul, and its salvation; but a minister of the gospel, whose praise is not of God, but of man, trifles with the souls of others, as well as his own.

There may be persons of a *refined taste* in the congregation, who admire a preacher for his fine style; and expect in return, that the preacher should sacrifice the *edification* of the poor, to gratify their taste. If such preachers deliver good and great things, their *manner* of delivering them is their principal object, not the gospel itself, as "a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation." Such "word-preachers" have their reward, "the praise of men," before whom they desire to "let their works shine." But let not the minister think, that those persons who pretend to great delicacy of taste, are *profited*, because they are *pleased*. No! it too often happens, that while they "corrupt the mind of the *minister*, from the simplicity of Christ,—the vain conceit of their own minds is strengthened.

No. XXXI.

ON CONVERSATION.

How may conversation in mixed company be rendered most edifying?

FIRST—By avoiding those evils, against which we ourselves have taken just offence: for "as face answereth to face in the water, so doth the heart of man to man." Those evils in the conversation of others, which have digusted me, excited my resentment, or diminished my esteem of them, and confidence in them, will, if I indulge the same, speak with equal force against ME.

"*A vain talker*" insults you by unprofitable words;—wearies you by the length and repetitions of his discourse.

An *impatient* man provokes you by his unseasonable interruptions; and an *irritable* man, by quick resentment of the least opposition to his opinion.

Of all the evils which counteract our usefulness in conversation, there is no one more powerful and extensive than *pride*; a sin which induces us to overrate our own opinion, and express a haughty contempt for that of others. The proud are selfish, impatient of contradiction, and passionate, under the cloke of zeal for truth. They make large demands on the attention of others—assume a liberty of interrupting them—degrade them by invidious comparisons; and by talking too much of themselves, defeat all the valu-

able ends of "a good conversation." The inspired injunction taken as our rule, shields us from these evils: "Be not desirous of vain glory;—envying one another, provoking one another." Conversation on a self-exalting principle, which tends to obscure the excellence of others, by *provoking* them, draws on ourselves the most painful mortification.

There is not any part of conversation which requires greater caution than ANECDOTE.

A strict regard to *truth* and *prudence* will shield us from the injurious effects of emulating the *droll*, which produces a laugh at the expense of character and usefulness, by adding, diminishing, or colouring. Of such a character a sensible man conveyed the following censure;—"He is a very lively companion; but he is such a liar, one cannot believe a word he speaks." Yet a censure much more awful was passed on a minister of the gospel by one of his best hearers, who remarked, that, "in relating what he had heard, he was so accustomed to violate truth, that he was tempted to doubt even the truth of God, when he heard it from his lips!"

An anecdote should be *seasonable*, not forced; related with simplicity, without adding or diminishing; calculated to enliven, without inspiring levity; and to confirm or illustrate the truth of God, and enforce the obligations of man. "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright."

If we wish others to "learn of us," we must imitate him who was "meek and lowly in heart." Edification must be our design; and by choosing a subject of general interest, by which we may instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, stimulate the indolent, establish the wavering, encourage the fearful, warn the unruly, and add fervour to the zealous Christian.

We shall facilitate our design by paying a respectful, patient, and lively *attention* to the remarks of *others*, and by a modest introduction of our *answers* to them. While kindly *submitting* our strongest reasons to them, after being "swift to hear and slow to speak," we may induce them to draw the conclusion. A more confident tone in us might induce them to demur. At least, we shall feel the satisfaction resulting from a "conversation becoming the gospel," in its truth and purity—the grace it displays, and the obligations it enforces. Nor should we, in mixed society, hazard a mere *display of argument* in defence of what we deem an *error*, lest we should lay a snare for our own souls, and the souls of others. By such presumptuous trifling with truth, I knew a minister who gradually reasoned himself out of "the faith," which he once delivered to the saints, and afterwards led his congregation into factious disputation, error, and division. When the clear perceptions of the mind, the warm feelings of the heart, and the words of the mouth, harmonize in the conversation of a good man, he will exhibit *the truth*; and his

belief of the truth, in the spirit and aim of an inspired writer, "I believed; and therefore have I spoken."

Since "God hath made man's mouth" to be the instrument or kindling, expressing, and improving, the natural, social, and sacred affections of the heart; we may pray, "Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise!" And address our own soul in the spirit and language of the psalmist,—"Awake up my glory,"—awake up my soul,—awake up my tongue. Never should we allow ourselves to trifle with "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," in witty or unkind applications, merely to afford diversion, or inflict a wound; nor hazard a sentence which may obscure its truth, enervate its evidence, or impede its progress; rather we should endeavour freely to communicate divine truth in wise counsel, tender sympathy, seasonable consolation, and faithful admonition. Thus promoting devout and benevolent affections, we shall instrumentally "administer grace unto the hearers."

We should seasonably adapt our conversation to our company: "A word in season, how good it is!" This was amicably illustrated by the conversation of him "who spake as never man spake." He awakened the thoughtless, instructed the ignorant, humbled the conceited, encouraged the timid, consoled the distressed, directed and animated the sincere inquirer, and "spoke a word in season to him that was weary." Although he silenced the captious, he never raised an objection merely to display his own knowledge, or perplex a hearer, but exhibited an admirable union of "the meekness of wisdom, faithful decision, and holy simplicity. Every word he uttered discountenanced error, reproved sin, encouraged the miserable in seeking relief, and enforced compliance with obligations to faith and holiness.

We should speak under the influence of suitable motives to an edifying conversation.

First, our conversation reveals much of our characters; for, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh: a GOOD MAN, out of a GOOD TREASURE, bringeth forth GOOD THINGS; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." And when evil men attempt to *disguise* their real characters, by speaking things good in themselves, "their speech betrays them." There is something in the spirit or manner of speaking, which does not harmonize with the truths they deliver; for "excellent speech becometh not a fool."

How important is the gift of *speech!* Its various and wonderful powers illustrate and confirm the awful responsibility of man, to whom this talent is committed; for, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue." In one man it is "an unruly evil; full of deadly poison:" in another, it is "an instrument of righteousness," promoting the health of the body, the purity of the soul, and the

happiness of society. In one, it wounds the peace, defames the character, and disturbs the order and harmony of individuals, families, churches, and nations. In another, it heals the wounded spirit, defends the injured, unites those at variance, and advances the personal, domestic, and social interests and comfort.

In one man it blasphemes God, degrades the Saviour, perverts truth, propagates error, and strengthens criminal passions. In another, it glorifies God, extends the Redeemer's kingdom, promotes the salvation of man, and the glory of God.

Our *usefulness* is another motive to edifying conversation. When "the tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright," he becomes an extensive blessing to society. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver," to enrich others. "The lips of the righteous feed many; and the mouth of a righteous man is as a well of life;" to those especially who are "hungering and thirsting after righteousness."

To the "broken heart, the tongue of the wise is healing." Thus by "administering grace unto the hearers," we augment the pleasures of benevolence in our own souls, and approve ourselves the humble imitators of him, of whom it was said, "Grace is poured into thy lips."

I do not wonder that *infidels* are numerous, when the fear and love of God are so weak in good men, as to be more anxious to appear as *gentlemen*, or politicians, than *believers* in *revealed truth*. If a minister of the gospel meets those who do not believe the gospel, in a coach, in a reading room, or at the table of a friend, and accommodates his conversation to the taste of worldly company, they will think him a *polite* man: but perceive no *difference* of sentiment, of disposition, of conversation or aim. It is an easy duty to convey a sense of God, of Providence, or of some pertinent portion of the sacred scriptures. This may be done as a *question*, in a respectful manner, so as to avoid the appearance of vain singularity. The satisfaction of having "confessed Christ before men;"—of having imitated him, who always improved opportunities of usefulness;—and requires us to "let our light shine before men," and frequently affords his blessing, when we are "ready to every good word," will be an ample reward.

Edifying conversation is accompanied by its own reward; by improving our talents, enlarging our understandings, and refreshing our hearts. "He that watereth shall be watered himself." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth."

While "the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness," in unjust censures, sceptical objections, lewd jests, and vain-jangling, "They that fear the Lord, think on his name," and *speak* the truth in love," will enjoy the contrast of their own characters, under a sense of the divine approbation. "A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth." God, who hearkens and hears, directs the hopes of his people to that day when "the book of remembrance shall be

opened," to justify their faith by their words and works. The influence of the truths we believe, and the anticipation of receiving the divine approbation before an assembled world, like the live coal, &c., will touch and cleanse and warm our lips, to render "our conversation such as becometh saints;" and although such conversation may expose us to the charge of enthusiasm, cant, and hypocrisy, from persons who practically say, "Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?" Yet we believe that "every idle word these men speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment;" when the Judge and Saviour will address the subjects of their reproach, with inconceivable condescension and grace, as "his jewels."

A desire to advance the honour of the Redeemer, should govern our conversation. He originally "made man's mouth," and impressed on it the characters of his goodness, wisdom and truth; and when grace renews the heart of a sinner, his tongue again becomes an "instrument of righteousness, ready to every good word," to express, to kindle and to improve the affections of the heart. By "sound speech," "seasoned with grace," he "maketh manifest a savour of the knowledge of Christ," in his doctrines and promises, precepts and examples.

Let us thus endeavour "to do good and to communicate," encouraged by the divine promises; "Them that honour me I will honour; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

No. XXXII.

NATIONAL SINS.

MANY of our men of wealth, office and rank, approve of the laws of God and man for the middle and lower ranks of society. They recommend them to live "soberly, righteously and godly;" while they "fare sumptuously every day," in intemperance, gaming, swearing and adulterous intercourse, without a blush. The law of fashion, the law of honor, the law of expediency, and the law of lust, have a share in the foundation of their characters and the regulation of their lives. And where is there a faithful Joshua, to search for the "Akan," who troubles our British "Israel?" To bring "the lot" on the guilty families or individuals? Where is the "Nathan," to bring home the charge,—"Thou art the man!" Where—the faithful preachers to declare, "There is no peace, saith my God unto the wicked," whether in the court, the senate, the nation or the church." "Measuring themselves by themselves," while administering to each

other the venom of flattery,—hurried on by the tumult of criminal passions,—diverted, engrossed, absorbed in a succession of pursuits of interest, power, worldly honor, and sensual gratifications,—they are "restless as the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" conscious of their superiority in means of self-indulgence, and to the vulgar censures passed on them, they seem to cherish the emulation of being "damned among human grandeurs and guilty pleasures," even on the sabbath day.

The intemperance which prevails among men of wealth, is a fruitful "root of bitterness." The man, who, as Wilson in his anecdotes records, was tempted under the power of his passions to whoredom, murder, or drunkenness, yielded to the last, and then committed the other two crimes. For, as divine truth expresses it, "whoredom and wine, take away the head." They darken the judgment, stupify the conscience, and enslave the affections. They "take away the heart from God,—from his word,—from the obligations of duty. Hence the injunction, "It is not for kings to drink strong drink, lest they drink and forget the law," the word of God, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted." Let our great men encourage the evangelical ministers in the churches,—supplant the drones by similar characters,—countenance a regular attendance at church by their own examples,—fill up the Lord's day with its duties and privileges in their families, and practically "call the sabbath a delight." And after filling the present places of worship build more, and place in the pulpits wise, holy, faithful and diligent ministers of the gospel; and thus, "shewing *their* faith by their works, prove their own faith by their works," and put infidelity to the blush.

No. XXXIII.

ORIGINAL SIN.

God made man perfect in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. The fall of man has destroyed the image of God, and now presents a world of ignorance, impurity and injustice. This depravity pervades every rank and condition of society; for, in Adam, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

After Adam had sinned, he had children in his own likeness; not in the likeness of God: and in the likeness of Adam as a *fallen* creature, we are born. This *native* depravity of children, soon becomes visible in its effects in pride, self-will, falsehood and bad passions. The testimony of the sacred Scriptures, fully confirms this fact. "Childhood and youth are vanity." As soon as we are born, we go astray, speaking lies. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an

unclean?" And how can he be clean that is born of a woman?—Temptation draws out this depravity of heart into sinful tempers, sinful words and actions; and a course of sinful acts, forms and strengthens *habits*. And although the characters thus formed by a sinful heart and suitable temptations, lead to different sins; there is a general likeness. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" and childhood. "We turn every one to his OWN way" in opposition to "the way of the Lord."

What is the remedy *man* provides against this disease of sin?—EDUCATION. And we must acknowledge that education has its effects in the highest and middle class of society. In many instances it conceals, and restrains the external effects of depravity; but never *cures* it.

> "No outward form can make us clean;
> The leprosy lies deep within."

To change the illustration. Education may *polish* the marble; but it is still marble; and, under its smooth face, retains it hardness and its coldness.

The grace of God can "take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh."

A new heart, a pure heart, and an humble and a contrite heart, is the gift of God.

This grace of God, and this only can "create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us." The parents and friends of children are directed by this truth to expect this spiritual and saving change in their children from God. "Wherewithal shall a young man" or child "cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to God's word." Believing in Christ: for "the heart is purified by faith." By a serious study of God's word. "Sanctify them by *thy truth*."

But if children are to be made holy by the truth of God, it is proper to teach them to *read* and *understand* it. This is a RELIGIOUS education, which teaches the knowledge of God—of his law—of ourselves—of the fall of man, the redemption of man, and the grace of the Saviour in preaching to him repentance and the forgiveness of sin.

No. XXXIV.

EFFECTS OF FAITH.

THE effect of strong faith in the righteousness of Christ, is honourable to the grace, holiness, and truth of God: in raising

believer above fear, above guilt, above the love of sin, the love of the world, the fear of death and judgment. He tries to doubt and cannot. Grace *reigns*. He looks to the law, his sins, his duties, his heart; and Christ hath the pre-eminence in justifying him. He tries to fear—he would suspect himself—he would think the blessing too great; but grace prevails. The blood and righteousness of Christ overcome; and he overcomes by them. He asks, "What shall I say to these things?" Less than this would leave me in condemnation; more I cannot enjoy. It exactly meets my condition; and is worthy the love, the wisdom, the justice and truth of God. If true, it is all I need; if false, I am still miserable: but if the word of God decide, it is full of grace and truth; and I am filled with peace.

A soul enjoying its justification, is spiritual in devotion, grateful for mercies, patient in tribulation, resigned under bereavements, zealous for the purity of the Gospel, diligent in promoting its reception, affectionate to Christ and his people. In such a soul, the doctrine of justification is full of the power and increase of God, in humility, purity, joyful hope and admiration of the work of the Saviour, the operation of the spirit, and the reign of grace in the Father.

The rich, in the enjoyment of this blessing, are secured from the snares of prosperity; doubly happy in their temporal blessings, and liberal to the church and the poor.

The poor believer, exalted in the righteousness of Christ, enjoys his little earthly good with contentment, submission and gratitude; and becomes a blessing to his family, an example to the church, and faithful to his employer. It sanctifies his temper, fortifies him for trials, secures the improvement of his time, and renders his whole conversation becoming the Gospel.

No. XXXV.

CHARITY.

Is a *persecutor* charitable to the person's safety, character or peace, whom he persecutes?

Is the *bigot* charitable, who thinks those that differ in sentiment and practice from him must be wrong?

Charity must be consistent with *truth*:—and if the word of God doom the unrighteous to hell, it is not *charity*, but the most daring infidelity, to expect that God will forfeit his word to save those whom he threatens to condemn?

The Scripture saith, "The wicked shall be turned into hell;" is it

charity to tell the wicked they *shall not.*' Is not this the way to murder souls, by leading them to disbelieve the truth, to believe a lie, and to expect salvation in their sins? Was not this the charity of the devil, who assured our first mother, "Ye shall not surely die?"

Some find joy in the sins of others; in the sins of real christians: they rejoice in *hearing* and *reporting* a real fault! They very charitably *believe* the slanders of others, and *say* they believe them, when they do not! Yea, they very charitably *invent* a falsehood, and say they were *told* it. But if you rejoice in the real or imaginary sin of any good man or woman, do you not rejoice to see him "stab at once the Christian name, and his own soul?" Is this *charity* or *love?* Is it not the malignity, and cruelty of a devil? Can any disposition be more opposite to God, or more like the devil, than that which feels pleasure in the sins of others?

Do you love their sins, because their example keeps you in countenance? Or is it not *hatred* of the person, the root of your pleasure in his sins? Rejoice in SIN! What that evil which darkens, defiles and enslaves the soul! and by separating it from God, and exposing it to his wrath, *destroys* the soul for ever!

Real charity or love, will not tempt others to sin, but endeavour to *prevent* their falling into sin, *mourns* over their sin, *prays* for their *recovery* from sin.

Real charity rejoiceth in the *truth*, that is in the *truth*, in opposition to *falsehood;* and in *equity* or *justice*, in opposition to injustice.

There are not a few persons that suppose charity to consist principally in giving alms to the poor; but the apostle assures us, that a man may "give ALL his goods to feed the poor," and not possess this amiable disposition.

The word charity in St. Peter, is love; in Prov. x. 12, from which it is quoted; and evidently stands opposed to *hatred*, which by watching for faults, suspecting them, falsely imputing them, and aggravating them, "stirreth up strife." Prov. x. 13, 18, 25, Deut. iv. 27. Your charity or love may cover, that is, pardon the sins of a fellow creature, against you; but not your *own* sins.

No. XXXVI.

JUDAS.

JUDAS was one of the disciples and apostles of Jesus, whose faith, love, and sincerity appeared not questioned by the other eleven apostles.

When the Saviour warned them, "One of you shall betray me," each exclaimed, "Lord! is it I?" Judas uttered the same words; yet, even in the act of betraying his Lord, attempted to cover his hypocrisy, crying, "Hail! Master; and KISSED him." He appeared to love the Saviour—associated with him and his brethren to hear Jesus converse, preach, and pray. He was as high in office as any of them; and was trusted with the purse containing their little fund. He was an artful knave, full of guile—a consummate hypocrite, whose religion was only "a cloke of covetousness.

His conscience was his accuser, and "a swift witness" against him. His conscience was the judge that condemned him. He was also his own executioner, for he "hanged himself." And what does all this prove? Not that the other apostles were hypocrites and the gospel an imposture; but that he, under all his professions of faith in Christ, and love to his people and ordinances, was "a deceiver—a devil!"

Why wonder that similar characters should now exist? Exist in professed friends of Christ and his church; indulging their love of money, lust of power, lust of praise, or lust of the flesh, and malignant passions, under apparent faith, zeal, liberality, orthodoxy, and high sounding professions! The Bible does not deny the fact; but stamps the character with infamy, and denounces woe! woe! woe! against "the hypocrites in Zion;" and, sooner or later, "fearfulness will SURPRIZE them!"

No. XXXVII.

MINISTERIAL DEPENDENCE.

How sovereign is the grace of God in its administration in the hands of a Mediator.

Many poor, illiterate Christians, read and hear the word of God with simplicity and teachableness, and receive it in faith. They do not possess the advantages of learning and criticism; but they enjoy the POWER by "the misnistry of the spirit."

I often fear that I do not honour the divine spirit in preaching and study; and often wonder that he honours my labours and conversation. This should encourage my prayers and excite my gratitude.

I have long visited the sick in despondency. This awakens suspicion of self-dependence, and leads me to God for his sufficiency to be displayed. Here I never fail. Whenever I come to this point, I begin to hope, "it is a token for good." He hath said it, "them that honour me, I will honour;" but we often first honour our own powers. To fail of success, is then a mercy. "The Lord is a God of judgment or wisdom; blessed are all they that WAIT for him."

May I "commend the truth to every man's conscience, as in the sight of God"—as *present*, to bless his own appointment—present, to observe my aims and my motives—present, to accept "the willing mind," and afford needful assistance. If I do not preach as in the sight of God, I shall preach by sense, as in the sight of men only. Then I shall hope from their good dispositions, or be discouraged by their prejudices and passions. If I "see God by faith," I shall make a faithful report, and trust that "aim which brings salvation."

Mr. W. said, he sat under the Rev. Mr. D. C. two years, indulging his sin, without remorse or any awakening reproofs. How can this be accounted for? The Minister commended *himself*, not "the truth." He commended himself to the *taste* of his hearers, by his *style*; to their prejudices, humours, passions, worldly interests. At best, he addressed their *understandings*, by the strength of his arguments. What followed? A false peace, a presumptuous hope, an unprofitable life, and a miserable death. I said to myself on hearing him, this man addresses every faculty but that of *conscience*. He does not commend himself to *any*, much less "to EVERY man's conscience, as in the sight of God!"

May I take the alarm—speak to the conscience—*appeal* to it—apply "the truth" to it, "without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

By doing this I *may* offend man; by neglecting it, shall offend God: then my ministry will be "the ministry of the letter;" and my sermons like "clouds and wind without rain."

Two things are of unspeakable importance in Christian experience: the knowledge of our *own insufficiency*, and *the sufficiency of God*. This is of still greater importance to the Christian minister.

I have felt my own insufficiency in opposing sin, by all the motives the gospel suggests against it. I have reasoned, and prayed, and read the word of God, and found its power increased. Self-despair has led me to the Saviour; and one believing view of him, in answer to prayer, has raised me so far above its influence, that I should have thought, if former experience had not corrected the error, that

I never more should feel its influence to mar my comfort, discourage my hope, or darken my prospects.

At one season I have read the promises of pardon and salvation, as if it were impossible that my sins could be pardoned, and my soul saved. At another period, I have perceived such glory in the *person*, and such efficacy in the *blood* of Christ, that I have felt a conviction so clear, so deep, and abiding, of the all-sufficiency of Christ to save me, that I have in vain endeavoured to doubt. I feared the experiment was sinful, and I made it, because I dreaded *presumption*, and its delusive effects.

In *believing* I saw all the attributes of *God, honoured* in my pardon and salvation, my peace and usefulness greatly advanced.

I have seen *each* attribute honoured to the *highest degree*, and bowed to the reign of sovereign grace.

Now, I thought, had I the guilt of Adam's sin, and the sin of all his posterity upon my conscience, I could triumph in the truth, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin." I *could* not doubt it. In vain I tried to doubt. "My peace flowed like a river," which bore away guilt, sin, doubts, and fears, with irresistible force. Here is "the sufficiency of God!"

"What shall I say to these things?"

First, that I am without strength.

Secondly, that a sinner is saved by GRACE.

Thirdly, the obligation to *grateful love;* when "God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Fourthly, the importance of the first and great command of the Gospel, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and the encouragement to the duty in the promise, "and thou shalt be saved." *Thou*, whoever thou art—whatever thou hast been—"thou shalt be saved." Saved really, experimentally, freely, fully, and eternally saved.

Anything short of this leaves a sinner in his sins: beyond it language cannot reach—no thought aim. How worthy of God! How worthy of the Mediator! How suitable and adequate to my condition, my wants, my convictions, and my largest desires and hopes!

When I have related this experience, I have met with those of "a doubtful mind," and of "a fearful heart."

Perceiving their sincerity, I could exhort them to "be strong and of a good courage;" because they were as safe as the strongest believer, though not so happy.

When did the Saviour reject those of "little faith?" When did he ever "break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax?" Courage! weak believer, courage!

"The weakest saint
Shall win the day,
Though death and hell
Obstruct the way."

I have been weak, faint, doubtful, and fearful; but I never sought the Lord in patient perseverance, without finding the truth of the promise—"He giveth power to the faint; and to those who have NO MIGHT, he increaseth strength."

Probatum est!

No. XXXVIII.

NERVOUS AFFECTIONS.

—— Of all "the trials of the righteous," *nervous affections* are not the least. Mr. Westley observed, "they are the hand of God impressing us with the insufficiency of all created good to make us happy." Mr. Romaine remarked, that "nervous affections are the seat of Satan."

In these trials, the *imagination* takes the lead. The IMAGINATION of man's heart is evil from his youth. By this faculty we commit most sin, and by this we suffer most trouble. God, in his wisdom, makes that power in us, which affords the greatest pleasure, inflict the acutest pain. This is designed to prevent the indulgence of criminal thoughts and purposes. An imagination forging sin, often bids defiance to reason and truth: it does the same in resisting comfort! Our *friends* also suffer with us. Now they sympathize with us, allow the justness of our complaints, and aggravate our misery. Failing in their kind attempts, they endeavour to *laugh* us out of our gloomy reflections; but "as vinegar upon nitre (which frets it), so is he that SINGETH SONGS to a heavy heart."

When I was under the typhus fever, a friend said, dear sir, you are low spirited. Yes, madam, I answered, that is my *disease*. My animal spirits are consumed by the fever; and my mind is affected by my body. I do not wish you to encourage my distress, but your laughing at me will never remove, but aggravate it. What then, dear sir, she replied, would you have me do? I rejoined, pray for me. God is my only hope. I look—"my spirit looks to God alone." Let my motto be your's—"Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him."

No. XXXIX.

THE ADVANTAGE OF PUTTING AWAY CONSCIENCE.

It will prevent a man's losing good bargains by being afraid to lie, to over-reach, to cheat his neighbour in buying and selling. Besides, you can take the advantage of a poor man's necessity, when he must sell or starve. You may also compel a poor man to work hard and long, for a trifle. And if he owes you money, compel him to buy of you, and sell him goods of little value for your own price.

When you employ a tradesman, run down his price, however just, and tell him another man will serve you cheaper. Should conscience hint that you are unjust and oppressive,—"put away conscience," by considering the end of trading and employing others, is to get money. If a good article is offered, say "It is nought, it is nought." Be sure to enlarge on any defect in it; and if there be no defect, make one and stand to it.—Require good measure if you buy, and make use of your brains, in measuring and weighing, when you sell.—Cover all with a little charity, and blow your own trumpet in making it public.

Should the preacher on a sabbath-day, enforce upon you "a conscience, void of offence towards God and man,"—apply it to another person, and say, it exactly suits them; and especially exhort all your neighbours, and servants, and tradesmen, to remember it. Should any turn it on you, praise the doctrine, but do not allow it to interrupt your profitable plan. Should any preacher or professor of religion, attempt to prove you dishonest or deceitful, "put away conscience" in them and yourself—charge them with something as bad or worse—and rather than alter your plan, leave them, remembering, that, "money answers all things."

Put away the bible—and with it the holiness, justice, and threatnings, and commands of God. It will leave you at liberty to follow your own inclinations without control.—You may then devote the sabbath-day to business, pleasure, and sin;—you may swear, lie, defraud, indulge in covetousness, pride, fleshly lusts, and intemperance.—You may boast of your honest heart, your honesty, your charity, and your freedom from the shackles of conscience.

If you think any religion necessary, it will be easy to form it to your own taste. A few good words now and then, some sallies of wit against being righteous overmuch, and a readiness to pardon all offences against God, will leave you free to condemn your fellow creatures, in slandering or defrauding you. Say, like an honest man above all shame, I wonder where the CONSCIENCE of the man was?—If *your* conscience should whisper, "Thou hypocrite!" Stifle it, shun it, sear it, until "past feeling;"—think of any thing else, and drive away all thoughts of sin, and death, and judgment.

Read books which make sport of religion, as fit only for the weak and credulous. If you must go to church for fashion's sake, take the earliest opportunity of showing that you believe all you have heard is a farce. If you have no religion, say, you never change your religion, but keep to that in which you were born and bred. Should the sudden death of a neighbour, or a threatening disease trouble you, and you must do something because conscience takes the advantage of such seasons, say you repent—bribe it by the sacrament or a few words of prayer—and promise if you recover, you will be *all religion.* If you recover from the panic or disease, "put away conscience," and next time, you will hope to recover and be less alarmed. This is a *fine progress.*

Play your part well in conversation, by making the stories to your mind. Leave out any part, or add a few sentences to enliven the spirits. By a habit of such chit-chat, you will please by flattery or slander, and pass for a lively wit, or a man of reading. The power of raising a laugh, by the pleasure it affords you, must render your company desirable and promote your influence. It is thus you level a rival, scourge the tradesman who troubles you for payment, leave a broad blot on those who despise your character, and rise above remorse, shame, or fear.

By company or cards, business or pleasure, news and light reading, keep off the hip, in a rainy day. If trouble or disease assail you, shut your eyes—do not think—drink or sleep if you can; and with undaunted resolution, if you *must* think,—suppose your soul dies with your body, that the Bible is a book of fables, salvation a vapour, a judgment day and eternal misery, the dream of such weak minds as Bacon or Boyle, Locke or Newton.

If your disease should continue, and occasion sleepless nights, and conscience should begin to read over-duties neglected, sins committed, death fast approaching, and the judgment seat open to your view;—believe all your doctor says of the certainty of your recovery, take an opiate, forget your past self, and *future self,* and if you cannot sleep, slumber. Be sure no one disturb you with religion, for that will give conscience power, in the absence of health and animal spirits; and when you are unable to divert yourself by business, cards, or company. If you would "put away conscience," do not look forward, beyond life—do not look at the past, and above all, do not look *within.*

But what if you should die? Will your conscience die with you? Yes, it will, if the word of God be *false*; that is comfortable. But should it prove *true*, you will be *all conscience*; and your conscience all light, all life,—a just accuser, a faithful witness, an impartial judge, a righteous executioner, and, in its effect,—"a worm that dieth not;—a fire, never to be quenched."

No. XL.

THE THEATRE.

SOME persons indulge "a delusive and groundless hope, that under certain regulations, the stage might be converted into a school of virtue."

The stage a *school!* this is mere pretence; for the "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," do not go to a play to seek *instruction*, but amusement.

The stage a school of *virtue!*—Such writers must use the word virtue *ironically*, and mean the stage is a school of *vice*. This seems to be *granted* by their *supposition*—"IF the stage were *purified* from its exceptionable parts—IF the stage were under better regulations—IF the indecent and profane passages of the plays were omitted." This is giving up the point, by admitting the stage, in its *present* state, to be defiled by indecency and profaneness.

But suppose *the whole system* of the stage to be purified, and exhibited *pure characters* in the *actors*, *pure sentiment*, and pure *expressions* in the *plays*, would the lovers of plays then frequent the play-house? No more than they frequent "the house of God," and for the same reason: the amusements of the stage, in its present state, are palatable to persons of the *worst* characters. Stage *professors*, are generally persons of immoral lives, and the plays themselves contain corrupt principles, impure and profane expressions.

The worst of dispositions, and the worst of actions, are, on the stage, so misrepresented, so coloured and softened, as to excite *pity* instead of *blame*, and *love* where our *indignation* should be kindled.

On the stage, duelling, suicide, and seduction, are excused, vindicated, and commended; and lawless love, is fostered as friendship, jealousy, hatred and revenge; pride and ambition are encouraged, as "splendid virtues." Such is the *school*, such the *teachers*, and such the *lessons* of the stage.

The stage gives additional force to bad passions, already too strong; and the slave leaves a theatre, so fond of his chain, as to imagine himself perfectly *free*. And if his folly, extravagance, and sensual desires, have involved him in difficulties, he learns by the principles and examples, executed and applauded on the stage, that a duel, in which he may murder another, or the heroic act of murdering himself through disappointed lust, called love, is at least harmless in him! Dreadful delusion! to imagine, that the indulgence of a passion, or the performance of an action condemned by the law of the land, by conscience, and by Scripture, should prove a person *free*, or find an excuse.

Persons who delight to deliver their own opinion as law to others, who never trouble themselves to *think*, especially those whose minds are strangers to themselves, to Scripture, and to God, will soon set this subject at rest, by gravely asserting, that frequenting a theatre is a matter of *indifference;* there is neither good nor evil in it—it is neither enjoined nor forbidden. *Indifferent!* can that be a subject of indifference to a rational, accountable, immortal being, which raises in the mind *false notions* of good and evil; which *defiles* the imaginations by *indecent representations*, and familiarises the mind to the awful levity, of taking the name of the eternal God in vain?

The impressions made on the mind at the theatre, "are deep and strong; deeper and stronger, perhaps, than are made by any other amusement:" and, consequently, *dangerous* in proportion to the degree of poison they convey to the heart.

There are but few, if any plays, in general esteem among the admirers of theatrical amusements, which do not break the third commandment.

The stage actors are obliged to *repeat*, and the spectators to *hear*, assertions, exclamations, and invocations, in which the most venerable NAME, the name of the ETERNAL GOD, is mentioned with profane levity. Can a man or woman that *reveres* the name of God, bear to hear them take those liberties with it, which they would not take with the name of a *gentleman*, in his presence? And can a *real* Christian encourage by his *attendance* on plays, a practice so hostile to the divine law, which says—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?" Or to the language of New Testament, which says—"Swear not at all?"

There may be excellent sentiments admirably expressed, in some of the worst of plays; but this renders them more dangerous, the poison being received with less suspicion.

It is pleaded, that some amusement is necessary, to unbend the mind and recruit the spirits. To this I answer—

First—Let the amusement be *lawful;* but to be witnesses at a theatre, where strolling players are acting, is against the law of the land, and the law of God.

Secondly—Let your amusements be consistent with *charity* or love to man. But is it charitable to the poor vagabonds, the players, to encourage them in a way of life which breaks the law, and wastes the whole of their time on plays? Is this the end of rational and immortal beings? Is it charitable to the *poor*, to lay temptations in their way, to draw them into dissipation, extravagance, and drinking? Does not the play lead to drinking? Is it charitable to tempt children, apprentices, and poor men, to places where God's name is profaned, and an indecent language is familiarised?

Thirdly—Let your amusements be consistent with *justice*. Pay your *debts* before you are so charitable. Let us not see you keeping your creditors and tradesmen from their money, and wasting

that money at a play-house, which is not your own. You may call this charity, but it is not *honesty*. "Do *justly*" is a divine command.

Fourthly—Let your amusements be consistent with sincerity. You say it is *charitable* to encourage the poor vagrants. "Love mercy," is also a divine command. But you do not go to the play in *mercy* to others, but to please yourself. It is not *charity*, but self-gratification which leads you to a play-house. Are the players poor? Let them engage in a lawful calling or profession, and God will "bless the labour of their hands" and heads. Are they hungry? Feed them. Are they naked? Clothe them. Do they want employment? Encourage them to become industrious and useful members of society. Do not suppose those persons "*love* mercy," who *talk* so much of the subject; and that they would be glad to *hear* their minister *preach* on the subject of charity. The last time I entered the Chapel of Ease with a friend, it was to hear a charity sermon; and I think there were not in the chapel four families beside the clergyman, who could afford to give any thing to the poor; *they* heard an exhortation to charity, but had nothing to give—but, where were the *charitable* then?

If your "bowels of compassion are so tender for the poor, how comes it to pass, that you waste so much money on your own appetite? Save the money you spend in drinking to excess, for the poor. There are widows and fatherless children, who need that wine you waste, and money you waste in gluttony and drunkenness.

Be charitable to the *souls* of men first. And is it charitable in you to set an *example* of swearing, drinking, whoredom, sabbath-breaking, and revelling to your neighbours? What hypocrisy in persons guilty of such sins, to boast of their *charity!* Are drunkards charitable to the *bodies* of others, who recommend drunkenness by their example? Is a *sot* charitable to his family or his neighbours? Is a slanderer charitable to his neighbour's *character?*

It may be asked, do not the DISSENTERS visit the playhouse?—This is a fair question, and I would fairly answer it.

The Dissenters, as a body, condemn plays; do not admit those who attend the play-house to the Lord's table, and if they visit it after admission, they are excluded. If they repent and avow their sense of the sin of it, in *principle* and practice, they are restored. But still instances occur, in which those who call themselves Dissenters, frequent the play-house. These dissent from the word of God, and their conduct is condemned by the body of Dissenters who enforce the Apostle's injunction,—"Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." And should any pious clergyman take up his pen, to show the inconsistent dissenter, that in "walking according to the course of this world," in thus "fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind,"—he violates his principles, grieves all good men, strengthens the hands of the wicked,

and dishonours the gospel; as a system of grace and holiness, —the Dissenters will purchase and promote the circulation of his book, and thank him for his faithful testimony. It is not the pious Churchman or Dissenter, who frequents the play-house: it is the Christian in name and profession only, who resembles a person on the stage, who acts the part of a mourner without grief, of a conqueror without victory, of a rich man without money, of a king without a crown, of a saint without holiness.

Does not a holy God say of such hypocrites, who pretend to pray for themselves and others; "When ye make many prayers, I will hide mine eyes from you?"—

Can the tradesman and gentleman make no better use of their faculties, their time and their money, than to waste it in the support of *players?* Must they present the poor an example of idleness and of waste both of time and money?—

Is this the meaning of their prayers at church,—"That it may please thee to provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate?"

"We beseech thee to HEAR us, good Lord."
"Son of God, we *beseech* thee to hear us."
"O Christ! HEAR us."

At the Church, they pray that "God would grant true repentance and his Holy Spirit; that those things may *please him* which we do at this present: and that the *rest* of our life hereafter, may be pure and holy."—From "the house of prayer," asking for "the HOLY Spirit," they go to the play-house, as if they requested the Spirit of God, to "lead them into temptation."—

In the church they pray, "O Lord open thou our lips, and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise;"—then to the play, where their lips are opened in unprofitable, foolish and unchaste conversation!

In the church, they pray,—"Grant, that this day, we fall into no sin;—neither *run* into *any kind* of *danger*; but that ALL OUR DOINGS, may be ordered by thy governance, to do ALWAYS that which is righteous in THY sight." In running to the play, they wilfully run into every kind of danger, by inflaming their criminal passions; and thus their actions are at variance with their prayers.—

The lovers of the play-house deceive themselves, by "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."—They waste their time and money; rush into the temptations of the enemy of their souls;—present a bad example to their children, servants and neighbours, and by a frivolous spirit and dissipated conversation, show the *mould* of the plays in which they have taken their form.

Would you think, reader, that many of these very persons, were last Sabbath-day, at church, saying, "I believe in the communion of SAINTS." And praying,—"From all the deceits of the WORLD, the FLESH and the DEVIL,—Good Lord DELIVER US!"

Crying to the great Saviour,—" By thy agony and bloody sweat; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost,—Good Lord, deliver us!"

This is the Scriptural idea of a HYPOCRITE: one who assumes the name, the profession, the sentiments and forms of a Christian,—without the *spirit* and *dispositions*; the *pleasures* and *aims* of a christian.

Since I wrote these remarks, the son of a respectable tradesman has taken so much money from his master's till, that the expenses of the apprentice have made his master a bankrupt. A second son has left his family and gone off with an actress, and become as poor and debauched as herself.

A mother accompanied her new married daughter to a play, and witnessed her death, by the confusion and hurry in leaving the play-house, her daughter was trampled to death.

An unmarried woman was taken into keeping by a married man, and deserted the child she had by him, which died. She was seized by affliction. After repeating a form of prayer in bed, according to her custom, she imagined she saw the devil standing by her bed-side, with two accusers, who alleged that she had murdered her child. Then the messenger of the Judge of all appearing, said, "devil, take her."—I was called in to witness her distorted features, her elegant dress, her distraction and depsair.

A married man, seduced by the beauty and arts of a female actress, told me, under the anguish of recollection, that he had seduced *two hundred females*, married and single, since he first visited a play-house!

No. XLI.

INFIDELITY.

AN infidel with all his *doubts* of the truth of *his own opinions*, will still *pretend* to believe them: he *wishes* the Bible may be false,—*fears* it is true—and so far from *examining* the book of God, with an humble, teachable, imploring spirit, "he hates the light," and avoids it, from the dread of ridicule, the pride of intellect, or the violence of sensual appetite." . . . . . We confidently appeal to the *experience* of those unbelievers who have been "converted from the error of their way,"—and to the *consciences* of those who still "rebel against the Light." In the vigour of health, the infidel glories in the *uncertainty* of a future state; but "when passing through the valley of the shadow of death," what feigned indifference or dreadful forebodings of an awful eternity!

Do we discover in "the latter end of these men, any principle above the *brute?*" They desire immortality in "this present evil world;" and dread immortality after death! "I should be easy said an Infidel, if I were *sure* there was no future state, but I am *uncertain* on this point. The Bible may be true; and my fear that it is true, is stronger than my hope of its proving to be false. This renders me miserable." This man was apparently cheerful in health and company; but when the gout affected his stomach and his head, he called for the Bible and listened, until, alarmed by its truths, he ordered the reader out of the room. "The way of transgressors is hard."

Why, said an infidel, all this bustle in building places of worship, preaching, schools, and Bible Societies, if the Bible be self-evidently true?—Because, answered a good man, they *believe* the truth and importance of the Bible. And why, Sir, are you and your unbelieving friends so indolent that *you* do not support institutions at any labour and expense, to propagate your sentiments?—Because you do *not believe* them. You *wish* to believe your own lie and cannot: you *try* to believe the Bible false, and dread the consequences of its being true.

No. XLII.

JUSTIFICATION.

How shall man be just with God?—This is an inquiry of universal importance. It is no *party* question; but presses on the conscience of the Pagan and the Jew, the Mahometan, the Papist and the Protestant.

After Adam had transgressed the law of God, he felt guilty before God. Guilt produced fear, and fear caused him to flee from the voice of God. "Adam, where art thou?" "I heard thy voice and was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."—He was naked—had no robe of righteousness to cover, adorn and justify him in the sight of God. Ask our guilty father how he or any of his children can be just with God? He is speechless!

When Luther was convinced of his guilty and condemned condition, he was three days and nights without food or sleep, because he could not answer this question. He could not perceive how God could be just and yet justify him.

A Pagan would offer the fruit of his body, even his first-born, to atone for the sin of his soul. Ignorance and pride in a Papist and a Protestant, induce them to "go about to establish their own righteousness," which consists in ceremonious services; in a few moral duties performed in slavish fear; in their imaginary sincerity; in their

sufferings and sorrows; in their cold charity; or, in their conceit of not being so bad as their neighbours.

Or, perhaps, they trust to the general mercy of God, without any knowledge of the purity of his LAW or the strictness of his JUSTICE.

Such deluded souls think their sins are not so great or so numerous as the sins of others: and that their services to God and man are sufficiently meritorious to avert the displeasure and procure the favour of God. Others pretend to *faith*, which consists in a persuasion of the goodness of their *hearts*, the merit of their duties and sufferings; and that God is too merciful to punish such as themselves.

The importance of the question appears with still greater force, if we consider the manner in which many treat the *answer* to it, contained in "the Scriptures of truth." Man is justified solely by the righteousness of Christ, placed to the believing sinner's account, by the sovereign grace of God. This proves "a stone of stumbling," and to such, "Christ is dead in vain."

Instead of believing in Christ for righteousness, one thinks this method too cheap and too easily attained. A second imagines the plan too difficult to be accomplished, because the blessing is so great, and he is so unworthy and so ill deserving.

A third adds his own works to the righteousness of Christ, and seeks his justification neither by grace alone nor works alone; but by the merit of Christ, to make up the deficiency of his own.—Thus, ignorance, pride and unbelief exalt the sinner and degrade the Saviour.

But, a fourth imputes the righteousness of Christ to himself,—presumes on his own safety, calls this presumption, *faith*, and holds fast the delusion, in pride, contempt of others, and complacency in in himself.

The justification of a believer in Jesus Christ is quite distinct from, and independent of—his *knowledge* of it.

Every believer is justified, that is, pardoned, and accepted, as righteous and entitled to eternal life: but every believer does not possess peace with God, in the same degree, by actual enjoyment of it. Genuine faith may be weak, encounter great difficulties from temptation, obscure dispensations, the evils of the heart,—a weak capacity, a partial ministry,—want of means, and association with those who are "unskilful in the word of righteousness." Little faith, doubts and fears.

One who is strong in faith is not only justified, but has rich peace with God. He differs from the weak believer, not in the completeness of his pardon, justification, acceptance and a title to heaven; but in his degree of faith, and his actual enjoyment of his privilege. Faith in both is "alike precious" in its nature and tendency, and both are equally entitled to salvation. Like two children

equally entitled to an estate, one may be ignorant of his title-deeds and the other well acquainted with them; or like two criminals receiving authorized information of the king's pardon; one may believe the testimony with humility joy, and gratitude; the other may doubt its truth, fear it is delusion, and, although equally safe, enjoy, for some time, neither his pardon, food or rest.

No. XLIII.—Love of God.

Love of God is the great command, and the love of man is like it, in greatness, being the *greatest* duty of one man to another. It is called the great command from its *object*, God!—Its *order*,—it is before all others; it is a root of all moral excellences.

Great in its *nature*, Love;—as the sun to the stars. It comprehends *all* duties; and is the scope of all the precepts. Great in *duration*.

Its *hindrances* are sinful *self* love. 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2. The *world*, 1 John, ii. 15. Of *sin*, Psm. xcvii. 10. In *lawful* things lies our greatest danger.

Eminent examples of loving God, we have in Abraham, (Gen. xxii.) Moses, and Paul, and especially in Jesus.

There are different *degrees* of love to God, and various motives for loving him; as for his *kindness* to us. Psa. xxxi. 23; a spiritual affection excited by temporal blessings. And when we use our reputation and influence,—our property, our time and comforts for God, it is expressive of *true* love. Perfect love flames in heaven; on earth we love "but in part." It is however a *permanent* affection; unlike *repentance*, adapted only to a state of imperfection, it lives and grows in heaven, and never fails. 1 Cor. xiii. 8. It is a *vigorous* affection; "love is strong as death." What can stand before it? It unites us to its object, 1 John, iv. 16, and produces a harmony in judgment, will and conduct. Affection produces union, communion, familiarity, and a kind interpretation of the divine providence.

Love of God should be sincere and cordial, Eph. vi. 24. Judicious, Ps. xvi. 7, ardent, pure, active, unlimited. Such a love unites and subjects the heart to God—it imitates God, and uses all in subordination to him.

No. XLIV.—Love of Self and Others.

Sinful self-love is the source of evils, personal, domestic, ecclesiastical, and civil. As a *creature*, a man should love himself, his body; Eph. v. 29;—his soul; Prov. viii. 36;—2 John, ver. 8. All divine commands and thanksgivings imply this duty. Love God *as* thyself, Ps. xix. 11; Deut. xxx. 19. We should love our

neighbour as ourselves; this is manifested in our way of *judging* ourselves—we do not unjustly condemn self.

Thus in *Censuring*, we do not censure ourselves for doing our duty, as Jer. xviii. 18; nor by false reports, Tit. ii. 3; *malicious* statement of truth, Ps. lxiv. 6; making a fault *greater* than it is; speaking of it with indifference or pleasure.—We *desire* good to ourselves—we *endeavour* it.

In what *manner* should we love our neighbour as ourself? In a *holy* manner, Ps. xcvii. 10; Rom. xii. 9; Ps. ci. 3. *Orderly*, the *soul* first, Dent. iv. 9; so our neighbour, 3 John, 2; Jam. v. 19, 20. It is a great thing! It promotes improvement in happiness, 1 John, i. 3; *unfeignedly*, 1 John, iii.; Rom. xii. 9—*fervently*, 1 Pet. i. 22; *tenderly*, Eph. iv. 29, 32; by *sympathy*, Rom. xii. 15, Neh. 4; Forgiveness, Gal. vi. 1; Succour, Job, xxx. 25; 1 Thess. ii. 8; Isa. lviii. 10. To love others *as*, or *like*, ourselves, requires *resemblance*, not *equality*, Mat. xxv. 9; Luke, iii. 11. This love is regulated by the character and condition of its object, Ps. xvi. 3. Saints should be loved with complacency, others as moral, with approbation, Mark, x. 21. Benevolently, *all* men, Gal. vi. 10; Mat. xxv. 34, 36. Relatives, 1 Tim. v. 8. *Pitifully*, Luke, vi. 35; Acts, xiv. 17; Rom. ii. 4; xii. 21.

What a man's love is, that the man is; and where his love is there the man is, Mat. vi. 21. If its object be absent, love desires it—if present, it delights in it—if in danger, it excites fear—if opposed, it is angry—if lost, it mourns—if attainable, it hopes.

No. XLV.—Love of the World.

All worldly goods, sensible, civil or mental, so far as they are fuel to lust, are unlawful, 1 John, ii. 15. It soon appears when the world is our *element*;—it is *too eagerly* pursued, Eccles. iv. 8; it makes us *vain-glorious*;—and produces "pride of life." This is the weight, the centre of gravity, Heb. xii. 1. It *bends* the heart, as Israel's, to its idols, Hos. xi. 7, as the sensualist's to his pleasures; the avaricious to his money; the ambitious to his honour. Love *unites* the heart to the world, incorporates the world with the heart, Hos. iv. 7. It *subdues* the heart to its sovereignty.

It *engrosses* the thoughts, time, and exertions. It is full of *cares*, concerns for the world, Mat. xiii. 22. It "*minds*" it with solicitude, earnestness and delight. They *savour* the world, Phil. iii. 19. They are greedy after it, Luke, xii. 15. It regulates their joys and sorrows, fears and hopes, Luke, xviii. 23.

Love of the world, is inconsistent with the love of God, Mat. vi. 24. No man can *serve*, though he may *have* two masters; or be at their disposal, as in these times and countries. The world demands supreme attention to its interests, that religion should not

interfere with it—to rest in it, (1 Cor. vii. 31,) *use*, not *abuse*. To seek our own reputation in it; to be great and not to be scrupulous about small sins:—Like a luxuriant vine, Hos. x. 1. What fruit? Idolatrous love, as verse 2.—It *confides* in the world, Mark, x. 24.; Ps. lii. 7.

It *idolizes* the world, Eph. v. 5.; Col. iii. 5. Pleasures, honours, riches, creatures, become gods! It *alienates* the heart from God, Jam. iv. 4. It seeks to the world, as to a friend, Jam. iv. 4. Makes religion subservient to it, Ezk. xxxiii. 31; John, v. 44. Is productive of all kinds of sin, 1 Tim. vi. 9.; it gives *temptation* all its force, blinds the mind, and excites "foolish lusts."—It stifles conviction, as in Balaam, 2 Pet. ii. 15. It pollutes and deadens the soul. Hence quarrels, Jam. iv. 1. Ends in apostacy, Gen. xix. 26. Judas, Demas. Sometimes leads to infidelity, Mark iv. 18, 19. Yet it feeds pride, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Yet how transient, 1 Cor. vii. 31.

No. XLVI.—Assurance.

Assurance in this world is imperfect, we know but in part, yet our certainty may be real, not mere conjecture. It is supported by *strong evidence*, though not always perceived. It is stronger than diffidence, and prevails against distracting fears and doubts.

When accompanied by its proper fruits, it is true assurance, such as that peace of mind which is the feast of a good conscience, Phil. iv. 7; holy joy, Gal. v. 22; power over temptations; victory over the world, 1 John v. 4; enlargedness of heart in the love of God, 2 Cor. v. 14; delight in his ways, Ps. xl. 8; ready obedience to his will, joyful patience under the cross, Job i. 22; humble freedom in prayer, Heb. iv. 16; Gal. iv. 6; dependance on God, in different conditions, Ps. lxii. 8; a reconciliation to death, from a desire to be with Christ and like him, Phil. i. 23.

This assurance bears different names. A *sure persuasion*, Rom. viii. 38. *Knowledge*, 1 John i. 5. A substantial prepossession of heaven, Heb. xi. 1. Fullness of assurance, Heb. vi. 11; x. 22; 1 Thes. i. 5. Assurance of *faith*, as being its effect.

If salvation were by *works*, and not of grace, grace free and promised, our assurance would be impossible. Every thing necessary for *salvation* and *assurance* is revealed, *fully*; nothing is wanting; *clearly*, the lowest capacity may understand it; *evidently*, by fullest proof; and designedly, for this end, Rom. xv. 4; 1 John v. 12; John xv. 11; Heb. vi. 11.

A good man is qualified to judge of his own conversion. 1 John iii. 19, 20; v. 10; Rom. viii. 16; 2 Cor. i. 12. He is as capable of knowing his character as a wicked man, Prov. xiv. 14; Rev. ii. 17.

It is not mentioned as if attained by extraordinary revelations, but fair reasoning, 1 John ii. 3; iii. 19; 1 Thes. i. 3.

It is a christian duty to seek assurance of his salvation, from divine authority, Heb. vi. 11; 2 Pet. i. 10. Search the scriptures, our ways and hearts. Diligence is a necessary means, Phil. ii. 13. As in natural things, we do not cavil, but easily understand how God's blessing on the hand of the diligent maketh rich, Prov. x. 22. So in spiritual riches, Col. ii. 2. We may be sure, and *more* sure of it. The promises were *sure* before Christ came; but more (evidently) so afterwards, Rom. xv. 8. Eminent growth confirms us, 2 Pet. i. *Add* to your grace a "full assurance of *knowledge*," of those truths upon which assurance is built, both in scripture and the heart,—a clear and distinct *acknowledgment* of these things.

"Full assurance of faith;" full assent to the gospel,—consent to its promises and commands;—dependance upon its grace, for full experience of the obedience of faith, Heb. x. 22.

"Full assurance of hope." Hope's anchor in a believer holds by the threefold cord of testimony, sense, and reason.

The reasons of our hope, and a conclusion built on these grounds that we shall be saved.

The *advantages* of assurance are many and great. Bellarmine, a popish writer, says "doubting promotes humility; and assurance, carelessness." This is an error. One advantage of assurance is more complete victory over remaining sin: as the Israelites, conquered by assurances of victory over their enemies. With this assurance they exchanged despondency for lively and persevering exertions, for deliverance from Egypt. Confidence of interest in the grace and righteousness of Christ, arms the soul against guilt and sin. The tendency of grace is to destroy sin, Tit. ii. 11. Mary *knowing* her sins forgiven, loved much. It shields us from worldly influences in its *allurements*. Moses knew the greatness of the reward and his title to it, Heb. xi. 26, 27. The *frowns* of the world, too, lose their fatal effects, Heb. x. 34. It gives *victory over the fear of death*. So Simeon, Luke ii. 29; Paul, 2 Cor. v. 1.

No. XLVII.—Perseverance.

Real christians must finally persevere to glory: 1. Because God's purposes are unchangeable, Rom. xi. 29; viii. 29, 30. His purpose "stands" stedfast, 1 Sam. xv. 19. He has strength to accomplish his decrees.

2. Divine knowledge, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

3. The Covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40; John x. 27; 1 Cor. i. 8, 9; Jer. iii. 1.

4. The Promise to Christ. Isa. liii. 10. *Satisfied*, not even with their being brought to the birth, but to glory, Heb. ii. 10; John xvii. 6, 12.

5. The intercession of Christ, John xi. 42; xvii. 9, for the

elect. For what? ver. 11, includes perseverance. From what? ver. 15. For whom? ver. 20. Hence Peter's recovery! Christ prayed for him, Heb. vii. 25; Rom. viii.

6. The in-dwelling and operation of the Spirit, John xiv. 16, 17. They are his temples.

No. XLVIII.—Habits.

There are four properties of some acts, which prove the existence of *habits*—natural, acquired or infused; facility and promptness to act,—pleasure in acting,—universality, as the object of the action; constancy, as to the continuance in acting.

No. XLIX.—Affliction.

Moses and the Israelites, David and other good men, appear to have been punished and pardoned. Their sufferings, *materially*, look like punishments, and may be acknowledged as such; yet they are not legal punishments, but fatherly chastisements. They are not for satisfaction to justice. They proceed from other causes, and are designed for other ends. Their *source*, is paternal love, Heb. xii. 5, 6; Rev. iii. 19. Their *design*, to make them more sensible of the evil of sin, Jer. iv. 18. To prove their graces, Deut. viii. 16. To purge their consciences, Isa. xxvii. 9. Refine their spirits, Zech. xiii. 9; 1 Pet. i. 6. And save their souls, 1 Cor. xi. 32; 2 Cor. iv. 17. All this, is consistent with pardoning grace.

No. L.—Good Works.

Good works are important, Tit. iii. 8; Acts ix. 36; Heb. x. 24. In all our obedience we should evince, the vigour of faith, Jam. ii. 18, 22. Faith is manifested, as 2 Cor. xii. 9. The *reality* and power of faith is thus shown:

2. They should be expressions of thankfulness, Ps. cxvi. 12, 13; 1 Pet. ii. 9; i. 5, 11.

3. To strengthen our assurances of divine love, 1 John ii. 3, 5.

4. The edification of our brethren. That our zeal may provoke many. 2 Cor. ix. 2; Mat. v. 16.

5. The adorning our profession of the gospel, and stopping the mouths of adversaries, Tit. ii. 5, 9,13; 1 Tim. vi. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 15.

6. Principally, the glory of God should be our aim, 1 Cor. x. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 12; Phil, i. 11; John xv. 8; Eph. ii. 10.

No. LI.—Reading the Bible.

Reading the scriptures in public and private, is a duty and privilege, John v. 39; Deut. iii. 11, 13; Jos. i. 8; 1 Thes. v. 19; Exod. xxiv. 6. 7. What can be the design of the bible? Rom. xv. 4. It was written for *our* learning, old or young, rich or

poor, male and female; John xx, 31. Its doctrines and precepts, its histories and promises are written for us; Rev. ii. 20.

Bishop Hooper, in a dedication to King Edward VI. remarked, "God in heaven, and the king on earth, hath not a greater friend than the bible." This book is the foundation of our faith, worship, and obedience.

No. LII.—Sin.

All sin is deserving of punishment; Rom. vi. 23; Ezek. xviii. 4; Deut. xxvii. 26. It is a violation of a divine law; 1 John iii. 4. It requires an infinite atonement, 1 John i. 7; Tit. ii. 14. Every sin is opposite to perfect love of God, Mat. xxii. 37. It requires *forgiveness* and repentance. Every sin defiles. It is a spot; Ep. v. 27. It is filthiness; 2 Cor. vii. 1, and renders washing necessary. Man is accountable for the least sin, Mat. xii. 36, 37.

What then are all our sins? How cruel to tempt others to sin! How just are divine chastisements! How wise to dread sin, and how foolish to make a mock of it! How patient is God, and how important is holiness! How suitable a saviour is Jesus Christ!

No. LIII.—Pardon.

Man is obliged by authority, to forgive man; God is not bound, nor capable of *such* a bond. Man offended, is finite—God, infinite. Men are mutual offenders; God wrongs no man, Jer. ii. 5. Man may have received benefit from the person he offends; God cannot be profited by us. Man does not so faithfully warn man, as God does. So different is human and divine pardon!

No. LIV.—Scripture perfect.

We must add nothing to the word of God;—nothing, as God's, which is not his.—Nothing, as equal in authority and importance.—No additions, which impute to God ignorance, imprudence, or negligence.—Nothing, that defeats its design.—That builds what he destroys, or destroys what he builds; Mat. xv. 2, 9. No wrong construction of his word.—Nothing to his doctrine, government or worship.

No. LV.—Influence of Faith.

The unspeakable influence of faith in Christ, under the duties and trials of life, appears from his counsel or command, just before he left the world. Whatever his disciples felt or feared, here is the

antidote *his* wisdom prescribes, "Believe also in me." We may be sure that this is the *best* advice, and adapted to his design. He would not afford them comfort by prolonging his stay on earth, but directs them to the exercise of a principle that would draw off their hearts from this world, and teach, them in desire, expectation and affection, to *follow* him.

No. LVI.—On Week-day Ordinances of Religion.

One argument for attending divine ordinances on week-days, arises from *experience*. The converse of real christians with the world, however cautiously conducted, will diminish the impressions of divine truth, at least in some degree, and the longer the intervals of worship, the weaker those impressions become. On the other hand, a frequent attendance makes *religion itself* our main business, which accords with our Lord's command, "Seek *first*, the kingdom of heaven." Never put this in the *second* place. This is in perfect harmony with christian experience; for young and lively christians, are in their element, when attending the means of grace: and all flourishing churches and christians, are frequent in religious assemblies. And who do you hear forming excuses, and gradually relinquishing this practice? The man who has secretly fallen into some sin,—who has entered more deeply into the spirit of the world. His language may be, there is no *command* for meeting such a day. This is true. Nor are we commanded to hear two sermons on the sabbath; but to keep it holy. The objections which backsliders make to week-day ordinances, are never made on a bed of sickness. No! they are then recollected as things which, having been neglected, render conversion doubtful. In such seasons their self-reproach and promises, prove, that *conscience* has been opposed.

The *effects* of such declension are often visible, relative to other duties. Is it a husband that pleads excuses? Do not his wife, children and servants, discern a declension in reading his bible, family-religion, profitable conversation, if not closet duties? Is not the temper more irritable, and are not worldly cares prevalent?

The duty of ministers, is to attend divine ordinances in season and out of season, 2 Tim. iv. 2. Does not this require of *hearers* the same duties? Can ministers preach without hearers? Does it not imply that hearers need repeated and frequent exhortations?

No. LVII.—Knowledge.

Our knowledge should be proportioned to our *means* and *time* of according them, Heb. v. 12; 2 Tim. iii. 7. It should be sought enjoying to our *capacity*, and the *use* we have for it.

We should desire to know *essential* truths first; and such knowledge as we can give a rational *account* of, 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Truths which are peculiarly seasonable should be studied, 2 Pet. i. 12, *Present truths.*—After Christ's resurrection, Christ, as Messiah, was the present truth. When the Jews adhered to the law, the apostles dwelt on free justification by faith.

We should study such truths as defend from the errors of the times and places where we live, Gal. v. 1.; 1 John. iv. 1. Such truth as will be most useful to ourselves, families, and neighbours.

A Christian desires *growth* in knowledge. He is not satisfied with just such a degree as will save him. It renders duty more pleasant, qualifies him to teach others, Rom. xv. 14. In a word, it promotes his obedience, his comfort, and usefuless.

But we should guard against curiosity in inquiring after things *unrevealed*, Deut. xxix. 29; Acts i. 7; or into the *reason* of his will, or things which concern others rather than themselves; things rather difficult and nice, than edifying.

No. LVIII.—Improper Books.

Those books are improper to be read which give partial views of the divine character, and misconstrue the end of the divine government; which tend to invalidate the authority, and subvert the doctrines, of revelation; which tend to false estimates of the moral condition of mankind, whether in a rude or civilized state; which inculcate unjust notions of the strength and capacity of the human faculties; which give undue importance to the less momentous objects of human pursuit; which hold up fallacious views of human obligations; and which weaken a sense of the awful nature of a future state, and present insufficient ground for confidence of happiness in it.

No. LIX.—Natural and Moral Inability.

There are two *essentially different senses* in which men are said to be *incapable* of doing things: there is a natural and moral inability. *Natural* inability destroys moral obligation; *moral* inability does not lessen it.

Moral inability consists only in the want of a heart, or disposition, or will, to do a thing. He cannot do a thing, because he does not chuse it.

Natural inability consists in, or arises from, the want of understanding, bodily strength, opportunity, or whatever may prevent our doing a thing, when we are willing to do it. Whatever a man could not do if he would, he is under a natural inability to do.

Thus God is immutably good, that he *cannot* sin; and Satan is incapable of any thing but sin.

So men are said to be *incapable* of mean or generous actions. Often we see a rich man who can, but will not relieve the poor; and a poor man who would, but cannot.

Covetousness is deaf to the cries of the poor, blind to their wants, and dead to their miseries.

He is infirm and cannot work, though willing; others strong and healthy, but lazy. He is incapable of learning from natural dullness; others from a conceited and unteachable spirit. Some cannot, others will not, see. We condemn the miser, the idle, the obstinate; but we excuse the poor, the infirm, the willing mind. If I have not faculties, bodily strength, or means, I am *naturally* unable: if I have these, but averse to salvation, I am morally weak.

No. LX.—Disappointment.

Many persons are seeking *rest* for their souls, in change of *situation* and *circumstances;* instead of a change of *disposition* to enjoy God, and accommodate themselves to his dispensations.

They *must* be disappointed. As they are "without God in the world," one place is as incapable of imparting happiness as another. They are *against* God too, and God, in every place, will be against them. If God be against us, who can be for us?

No. LXI.—Preaching.

If I address myself to an *infidel*, from the pulpit, or to *the sinner*, or the *unconverted*, who will apply it? I must be *particular* if I would be useful. I must prove and search the *believer*, the *devout* man, the *moral* man, who is only such in his own conceit; and thousands of such will be found, who have no faith, no religion, nor real morality.

Who will apply to himself the terms unconverted, irreligious, ungodly, self-righteous, because I repeat them from the pulpit?—I must *describe* the character intended; show the *operation* of the principle and its *effects* to which I allude. I must be *particular*, if I desire my hearers to be so; and present, to their view, truth, in such a manner as show them their own characters, as a glass shows them their faces.

A preacher may deliver himself with an agreeable style, and great earnestness, on common topics or comparative trifles: this does not prove him a zealous man, but that he is weak, in attaching too much importance to inferior truths; or he is *mechanically* moved, and venting warm passions, rather than gracious affections. If I heard him speak on redeeming love, with ardour, I might admire him; but

if, with equal ardour, he delivers himself on creation and providence, on politics and morals,—I suspect his HEART! To such a preacher, the observation of a clergyman will apply:—"Sir, I thank you for your sermon; but I fear that your very great vehemence has injured yourself without affording any advantage to your hearers."

No. LXII.—PEACEFULNESS.

How important is a peaceable disposition in society! A contentious one is fruitful of sin. The passionate are like a fleet of ships on a rough sea, in a dark night, in continual danger of running foul of each other; and no vessel can give a shock to another without receiving some injury.

In every society there are persons who wish to make themselves the rule of the rest: no coin must be current without their image and superscription. They give praise to that truth or virtue only, which they suppose reflects honour on themselves. Sobriety must never expect the good word of drunkenness; profligacy will condemn prudence; profaneness will mock piety; and the zealous christian be condemned by the lukewarm.

No. LXIII.—EDUCATION.

Who would think that burnished gold and polished steel, should have been in an obscure state, like the stones of the earth? The mind of man, improved by education, is just as different from the same mind in the state of nature.

No. LXIV.—THE TRUTH OF BIBLE HISTORY.

The bones of animals, shells of fishes, fruits of trees, are found buried at all depths of the earth, and even in the midst of the hardest stone or marble. Whence argue:—

1. The bodies were transported and deposited by a flood of waters; because most of them belonged to the sea.

2. That the matter of the earth must have been in a state of solution, when this happened; because it could not otherwise have inclosed sea-shells, and filled up their cavities through the smallest apertures.

3. That the flood was *general* or common to the *whole* world; because these monuments of it are found in all countries of the earth; on the highest mountain and in tracts most remote from the sea.

Such bodies must have been the remains of a former earth,—because they could not be the productions of the present. All former productions, of all climates, were floated on water, subject to wind, tides and currents, into *one place!*

Accordingly we find the fruits of the East and West Indies; bones, teeth, and shells from fish of different seas; the elephant of Africa, the tortoise of America, all near to one another in the same spot.

An instance to verify this fact has been found in the isle of *Sheppey*, in *Kent*.

What a burying place of a former earth! and what a testimony to the truth of Scripture!

No. LXV.—THE OLD SERPENT.

The bite of the *Serpent* diffuses death so rapidly through the body, that he may be said to have "the power of *death*." He is double-tongued and insidious; often undiscovered, until he has given the fatal wound. Wicked men are vipers too.

What a just image of Satan, who bears his name, as a liar and a murderer.

No. LXVI.—MISREPRESENTATION.

Truth misrepresented, answers all the purposes of defamation better than a lie; because there is some foundation of reason and fact, to build upon.

No. LXVII.—ALL SHOULD BE TAUGHT.

All arguments against teaching the poor may be answered on one consideration:—That God has given to man, a *revelation in writing*:—it must therefore be good for man to *read*. How read, unless taught? Is not *ignorance* dangerous? And children should patiently and perseveringly proceed to acquire by heart, as they glean corn, an ear at a time, until the amount is great.

No. LXVIII.—SELF-DENIAL.

Self-denial is not peculiar to the Gospel. The merchant leaves his native country, his relations and friends, all his domestic comforts traverses the ocean at the hazard of his life, is scorched or frozen, for what?—Gain. The soldier for honour and promotion, endures the fatigues of a campaign, the discipline of a camp, and the dangers of a battle. Many subject themselves to the humours of the capricious and imperious,—in expectation of a legacy. The

physician for fame and profit, denies himself rest and leisure. The scholar sacrifices his rest, his sight, his health, to the advantages of learning; and for want of it, how many are now sick, who might have been well, how many are poor, who might have been rich, how many are in prison, who might have been free!

Self-denial, then, is a guard on our property, our liberty, our character, our health and our lives!

No. LXIX.—Use and Abuse.

The happiness of man depends on the apostle's distinction being well observed, "using the world, so as not to abuse it," for every creature of God is good as it is used;—but disappoints, if abused.

No. LXX.—The Imagination.

The Imagination forms and figures, as a potter does the clay, or as a seal gives the impression. The first motion of sin begins in the Imagination. The passions act to fulfil the visions it entertains. Love and hatred, hope and fear, envy, revenge and despair, operate according to the images the mind has formed of persons and things; of itself within and of the world without. The slightest affront gives unpardonable offence, to the man who has formed a great idea of himself. So our ideas of worldly wealth and fame govern us.

On the stage, the self-murderer appears with dignity, the robber is merry and successful. What images! a sound imagination is like a mirror, plain and bright, and reflects all objects truly; but if its polish be injured, it reflects them imperfectly; and we conceive things slowly and obscurely. If the mirror have a false figure, it reflects the image wrong; it will make great things appear little and little things great, or even distorted.

Satan presents images to the imagination for torment. This is the seat of madness!—it creates, magnifies and multiplies the evils of life.

Let us, therefore, learn to govern the appetites, and avoid evil books—to study scriptures, where true images are found: let us not neglect the use of bodily exercise.—Faith and imagination began our conflict, and continue them. What imagination raises, faith throws down. Spirituality of mind is the best antidote against an evil imagination.

No. LXXI.—Amusements.

Balls, plays and cards, are not consistent with the principles, the spirit, nor the best examples of the New Testament. Would Jesus Christ have accepted an invitation to either? No: but this question will be thought too close.—Why should it? The scripture saith, "let the *same* mind be in *you*, which was in Christ Jesus;"—and declares, that "he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit;" he is united to Christ in judgment, affection, taste and design. "He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps." In vain then I am told, that these fashionable amusements are esteemed by the *best company*; for Jesus Christ, and those who best imitate him, are the best company. It would be no difficult matter to prove, that these amusements are perfectly agreeable to the vain, the gay and the giddy; and equally pleasing to the infidel, the profane, the idle, and the debauchee. To call either the *best* company, is to "call evil good, and good evil." They are called *diversions*, and truly; for they divert the soul from its most valuable interests, nourish a corrupt and trifling habit, and render it disaffected to "salvation from its sins."

They are designed as "*pastimes*;" but can time *so passed* to the judgment seat, afford any thing else than a justification of their condemnation, when such deluded souls shall give an account of time so passed and abused? Such persons say, that pleasures help to *kill* time: but will not such murdered time haunt them in sickness and kill *them* in turn, in body and soul. How many have been killed *suddenly*, in these exercises?—Many more by heating their blood, corrupting their passions,—by foul air, or cold air on their inflamed lungs, have lodged a mortal disease in their bodies! This is so striking a truth, that when Mr. Adair, a physician at Bath declared his intention of writing against such assemblies, the other physicians intreated him to desist from such a design, and asked him, if the assembly rooms were deserted, how twenty-six physicians then living in Bath, could be supported?

The affected lady says, after her ball, "I am so fatigued, that I am fit for nothing." Pray, madam, who required this at your hands? Had your maker recommended it, the duty would have been a burden; but he does not require you to exhaust your strength, waste your time, injure your health, disqualify your mind and body for personal and relative duties. This is your sin. You call such pleasures, relaxations; and truly your professed principles, your body and soul are relaxed with a witness; your soul is disqualified for religion. So true, so awfully true are the apostle's words, "She that liveth in (worldly) pleasure, is *dead* while she liveth!"

The divine command is, "Flee from all appearance of evil."—And Phil. i., 27; Mat. v, 14.

To oppose these vanities may subject me to the charge of being an enemy to *cheerfulness*. What! can the devotion of the night to such dissipation, render you cheerful the next day? Can it cheer you under a diseased body, the death of your relatives, your own death, or the views of a Judgment Day? Is this consistent with your prayer "thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven?" Does the will of God promote melancholy? Are not men happy in proportion as they live in God's will? Does not that Gospel which charges you to "redeem the time," cheer the soul with salvation, peace of conscience, faithful promises, and enlivening prospects? And dare you charge on God such an inference? Did you ever spend a night with half the exertion for the salvation of your soul, as you have at a ball? Go on, then, and in one of your delightful amusements, its tendency to afford you cheerfulness may be tried, by a mortal disease on your lungs, or an event more sudden and awful, which may speak our Lord's language forcibly to you,—"Thou fool: this night thy soul shall be required of thee!"

No. LXXII.—Self-Righteousness.

Every sinner will have "a refuge of lies," proposed to him, adapted to his circumstances. To a rich man Satan proposes *liberality*, or *charity*, to procure divine favour. To a *poor* man in distress, —hearing, reading and praying. To one—great sorrow, fasting, and a repetition of prayer and reading. To another—honesty, sobriety and faithfulness. He suggests, that God is *good*, and cannot damn a creature; that is, he is neither holy, just nor true. *Future* repentance, is not unfrequently resolved on; or, if no delay be admitted, they think, talk, read, hear of Christ, and commend him, without actually believing in him for salvation from sin.

No. LXXIII.—Society.

Man is a sociable creature, delighting in the society of his own species, and should desire their happiness next to his own. Instinct, the gift of reason, the faculty of speech, our necessities, and especially religion, are the sources of the sociable disposition.

No. LXXIV.—Anxiety.

An anxious regard to futurity, in this world, wastes our time, disturbs our peace, and obstructs the discharge of our duty.—Through what glass can we look, but that of the imagination tinctured by the passions, which misrepresents every object; dazzling us by their brightness, or sinking us by their obscurity. Imagination magnifies little things, and diminishes great ones. Let us

adopt the psalmist's motto, "Hope thou in God:"—then we shall expect the best, and prepare for the worst.

No. LXXV.—False Delicacy.

The *interesting policy* of neglecting our duty for fear of offending any one, is nothing else than a determination to do no good in that case, for fear of disturbing our own ease.

No. LXXVI.—Fear.

Fear, often disqualifies the mind for duty and comfort: it magnifies our difficulties, and discourages exertion. The same person who would not venture to cross a wide ditch on a strong but narrow plank, and a rail to hold by, will in his sleep walk on a piece of timber equally narrow on the top of a house, where he can only guide himself over it by his fingers! This can be accounted for by his being divested of *fear* in his sleep.

No. LXXVII.—False Peace.

It has often astonished serious and reflecting minds, how some professors of religion can maintain their *peace*. It may be accounted for by the *power* of *sin* over them. If they have long been familiar with sin it will darken the mind and harden the heart. Conscience neglected, its convictions stifled,—imposed on by a false rule of deciding on right and wrong, may become in different degrees hardened, as the hand by constant exercise in the use of some instruments; and as flesh is seared and rendered past feeling, by a hot iron.

A second cause is a trifling spirit. It is truly awful, to observe some persons of evangelical sentiments, exhausting all their thoughts, passions and time, on politics or village news. They find so many pleased with slanderous surmises and tales, that to collect them seems a mode of gratifying society. This levity of spirit regulates their choice of books, and is productive of unmeaning jokes, childish laughter and much nonsense.

A *sinful temper* long indulged, destroys tenderness of conscience. Some persons imagine injuries and wrongs designed, which were never thought of, kindle evil passions and pass sentence on the absent and the innocent, as if all were certainly true, which they suspect to be so; they vent their spleen in private, confide their wicked secrets which will not bear the light. Thus, at home and where they can be free, they *sin*, habitually, without being sensible of it, and even whilst passing sentence against others, in great

severity. A mind so constantly occupied, has little leisure,—is seldom at home. Objects insignificant or sinful, gradually indispose the mind for spiritual enjoyments and exercises.

There are some sins which abound among the professed followers of Christ. If one of them should swear profanely,—he would lose his character; but covetousness may be indulged in without loss of character, because it is so generally overlooked, and is "cloked," by so many excuses. A person may be guilty of misrepresentation and conceal it. He may wear two faces, be double tongued, seem the friend of two persons at variance, and secretly act as an enemy to both! Pride, is too conspicuous in the visible church, to all except those who are under its power. Many seem to estimate their *consequence* in the visible church from their *property:* they expect their judgment should decide and their inclinations be gratified. They are easily offended, and pleased with difficulty. They smile on their flatterers and frown on all that contradict them.

Such sins may reign long, without loss of character; but not without loss of *peace*. *Money* is sometimes of more weight than the authority of Jesus; and a *man* is sometimes made of more weight than that authority—by exalting himself as necessary to support the cause, or the minister of Christ—*professing* a wish to conceal his liberality whilst he labours to make it known!

No. LXXVIII.—Death of Friends.

Conformity to this world, in its spirit, maxims and customs, the death of relatives, is sinful in itself, injurious to ourselves, and operates on the world by our example to confirm their errors. Why imitate their parade in expensive funerals? Why keep from God's house, when most in need of the consolations of God, and best prepared to receive useful impressions from the word? The law of fashion governs us! This law governs alike those who are inconsolable, and those who rejoice in the departure of relatives. Our concern ought to terminate in our *immediate duty* to Jesus, to our relatives, and to society. In this we should live to the Lord, "and not to ourselves," nor to "the will of man".

To treat the death of a fellow creature with levity, betrays an awful absence of the feelings even of humanity; to manifest indifference on the death of a relative or friend, exposes the power of some selfish or evil passion; and either instance proves us too insensible of our obligations and our frailty, and for the time, "dead while we live." We ought to feel, to sympathize, to mourn.

The other extreme should be avoided. To abandon ourselves to grief and inactivity; to neglect our food, our rest, our living friends, or our God, will expose us to temptation. Whilst, brooding on death, as if the gospel afforded no instructions to duty, no cautions

against danger, no consolation under bereavement—is dangerous an impious. Nor should we be inattentive to "satan's devices" on such occasions. We must watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, to assume the appearance of sorrow which we do not feel; or to dispute the wisdom, the equity or kindness of God, in our bereavement. This is an interesting season, in which we should review our lives, examine our hearts, study our bibles, listen to the rod, double our diligence in trimming our lamps, and in preparing "to meet the bridegroom" ourselves. Inattention to present duty, may occasion us to grieve, to utter bitter lamentations, to shed unprofitable tears, to engage in useless conversation, and in the event, we shall "suffer in vain," and harden our hearts, if not provoke the Lord to leave us to ourselves, and plunge us into deeper waters. Whether therefore our sorrow be great or moderate, we must judge of its lawfulness by its tendency, and its effects. If it unfits us for duty, it injures us; if it leads to God, to the redeemer, to his word, to his house, and to "abound in the work of the Lord," it is a blessing. The mind may be dissipated in grief as *criminally* as in laughter; and "the house of mourning" is better to us than "the house of feasting," so far only, as by our grief, "the heart is made better."

No. LXXIX.—Faith.

In the experience of christians, we find they too often show more regard to the *actings* of faith, than to the *object* of faith. This is an error in experience. The scriptures principally direct our attention to the testimony of God,—the report of God by his messengers,—the record which he hath given of his Son. They testify of him, in his wonderful person, his perfect character, his mediatorial offices, his saving power, his great salvation, his faithful promises, his inconceivable love, his all-sufficient grace. They invite, exhort, intreat and urge sinners to believe in him; and promise pardon, justification, holiness, peace and eternal life, to all that believe. They dwell rather on *what* we believe, than *how* we believe; the *truth* believed, rather than the *manner* of believing it. They make no promise to a "*feigned* faith," a dead faith—that is to a heart destitute of real faith; but to a *believing unfeignedly*, with the heart, in the Son of God. There are differences of this faith, both in degree and in effects, but the quality of the principle is the same. It is a "like precious faith" in all believers,—in its object, warrant, kind and effects. Instead, therefore, of making distinctions on the nature of faith, as to its actings, we shall be more profitably employed, in considering the *truth*, the gospel, the glad tidings of God; and, on the evidence of revelation, endeavour, in dependance on the holy spirit, to *believe* "the faithful saying." The truth really believed, will produce its effects, corresponding to its own nature.

No. LXXX.—Heaven, future.

If a caterpillar were capable of considering and enjoying its future state, in which instead of crawling on the earth, it shall expand its wings and fly through the air, the thought would reconcile it to that intermediate state of death, or sleep, resembling death. And could a rational soul by faith in Jesus, possess a full persuasion of the advantages of dying, it would reconcile it to death, and by realizing its future glories, secure it from the delusive charms of its present state. A believing glance at objects unseen and eternal, through the medium of revelation, makes "the best estate of men," in this world, "appear altogether vanity."

No. LXXXI.—Spiritual Blindness.

It is really difficult to perceive with clearness, the truth and connection of the doctrines of the gospel, and at the same time believe one's-self blind to their spiritual glory; and yet, this is evidently the state of mind in which thousands of professors are found; they, seeing, as rational creatures "see not," "as new creatures;" they hear and read the gospel; they sing and pray; they talk well, "do many things," subscribe to the support of the gospel, may be acquainted with and esteemed by ministers, partake of the Lord's supper, and yet have "never SEEN God, never SEEN Jesus, nor (spiritually) KNOWN him!"

The *passions* of such persons may be agitated, by the gospel They may fear and hope, rejoice and grieve, as *rational* creatures, and remain the slaves of pride, selfishness, covetousness, vain glory, or fleshly lust. They may grow in the knowledge of the doctrine of grace, and continue the slaves of the *vilest tempers*. Indeed, they often grow *worse*, more irritable, conceited, and miserable. They *talk* much of *inconsistency*, in other professors, but are accustomed to overlook their own. They are at one time, in very fine spirits, and then would persuade themselves, that they are *lively christians* but "a spiritual man," can trace their gaiety of spirits, to a regular pulse, the animal feelings, cheerful society, a piece of pleasing news, or the gratification of some passion. Remove these causes and they sink into a desponding frame, if not into a fretful one; and they rise or fall, according to the state of the NERVES! How deceived—to attribute *natural* effects to *spiritual* causes! And yet how partial, to ascribe nervous affections in others, to the want of faith! They laugh at nervous disorders in other persons, and demand sympathy from all, if their *own* spirits are low. *They* are very poorly indeed, you must believe, when perhaps they are under the dominion of mortified pride, or some ill humour. The fact is, that neither their dejection, nor their elevation of spirits, is to be assigned

to the grace of God in the soul; but to a healthy or unhealthy state of the body. When we see a professor vain of his property, his gifts, his liberality, his usefulness, does it not indicate great *darkness* of mind? And are not levity of spirit, frivolous conversation, worldliness of affection, and bad tempers, when these things are predominant, striking proofs of blindness of mind? Can such persons see themselves? Or can they see such sins ruling other persons, and not censure them as inconsistent and doubtful characters, if not as carnal and graceless? Can more gross self-deception be found than to condemn *another* person as graceless, because some sins seem to reign over him,—and yet not suspect myself to be graceless, although under the dominion of the same sins? If it be sufficient to render any person's religion questionable in my esteem, that he is a gossip, a slanderer, or a whisperer? does it not prove, with equal clearness, that if I "bridle not *my* tongue," that "*my* religion is vain?"—Can any thing but foolish self-love, blinding my understanding, occasion me to think that to be sinful and dangerous in another, which is not so to me? Mrs. *Haughty* thinks her neighbours very proud, and although of low parentage herself, is fond of tracing the *low origin* of others. She allows one to be worth ten or fifteen thousand pounds; but adds, "I do not call that a fortune: and sometimes asks if you know how he came by it? And you are sure to hear, that it was ill-gotten by themselves, their parents, or grandfathers; and, therefore, cannot spend well. She affects gratitude to a *kind providence* for granting to her what it denies to others; and should you happen to acknowledge the same providence, for your own competency, she will not fail to remind you, that prosperity is no mark of divine favour; for it is granted to the worst, and denied to the best of men. How awful, that such pride and blindness, conceit and perverse inconsistency, should govern the soul of any person that professes to believe in, and imitate Jesus Christ!

The elect of God are described as "blind," Isai. xlii, 7, 18.

This describes their unconverted state, their comparative blindness after conversion, "knowing but in part." And how just the term here applied to them! How obscure their views of the plan of the divine government, the multiplied dispensations of Providence, the mysterious operation of the spirit within them, the passage from this world into the next, and the nature of heavenly glory, "to be revealed in us."

This darkness renders a principle of faith necessary. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known—make darkness light, &c.—crooked things straight." Here is the promise God has fulfilled in part, to every christian. Will he stop here? No, "These things will I do, and not forsake them." Enough! If he *knows* the way, and will still lead us by it!

No. LXXXII.—An Incident Improved.

May 12th, 1810. Saturday, a quarter before one o'clock, as I was walking with Mr. Shepherd, through an arched passage, into the green park, not perceiving that in the middle of the passage, the edge of the arch is not more than five feet high, I did not stoop, but walking briskly before Mr. S., the passage being narrow, I struck my head against the bricked edge and for a moment was stunned. How very, very near to eternity do we live! What poor guardians are we of our own lives, much more so of our own souls! A single moment, in health of body, may transmit the spirit to God who gave it. Shall I ever forget this incident! Rather let me devote a spared life to its guardian and its Lord, with renewed activity, as the best expression of my gratitude: let me leave my family only under motives of duty and in the spirit of a *christian* husband, father and friend; and living and walking, sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, "in jeopardy every hour," let me "die daily."—Surely I ought to examine if my soul is safe for eternity? And whether I have not overlooked some previous interposition of a divine hand in my favour; or, whether I am sufficiently awake to present calls of duty?

No. LXXXIII.—Dependance on God.

The design of God, in all dispensations towards his people, is to cure the disease of self-sufficiency, and teach them a *spirit* of dependance. There was to sense, no probable way for Israel to conquer Amalek, but by a skilful general, leading brave soldiers to battle. But the success, in reality, was made to depend on the perseverance of Moses, in holding up the rod of God, at a distance from the battle! That rod was a memorial of past miracles and a pledge of future operations on their behalf. Holding up that rod in obedience to God, was denying their own will, and trusting divine power. When by faith in all-sufficiency, engaged by promise, solicited by prayer, we preach or hear, engage in duty or suffer temptation and trials—we must succeed.

No. LXXXIV.—Growth in Grace,

Christians should *grow* in grace *proportionably*, 2 Pet. 1, 5, 7, as a child in every member; not with one foot or hand, this is monstrous; so is knowledge without faith, zeal without knowledge, godliness without temperance and patience, patience and temperance without godliness.

Uniformly in the *degree* of our graces,—grace, every grace is like a *seed*.

God has provided for the believer means of growth, in his word and ordinances. If he does not grow he declines, as a body or a plant; his happiness is advanced by it and his usefulness, 2 Pet. i. 8.

This should be done by proving first, that he is in Christ, *has grace*, Phil. 1, 6; or, ordinances are like water to a dry stick in the ground. Planted in Christ, you may grow. We should survey our barrenness; avoid all that is a hindrance in worldly things and worldly society. Chiefly regard union and communion with Christ, by repeated acts of confidence; and plead the promise made to such as are planted in the church, in Christ, and in the truth. To such, God will be as the dew, and they shall grow.

Many professors, alas! imagine they were called years since, and either grow not, or grow worse. They *were* proud and passionate, but not without remorse; *now*, their evil tempers are indulged in as if it were a privilege.

They grow peevish under trials, angry with disappointments, contentious about trifles, irritable and resentful if the least contradiction is offered to their opinions. They grow more suspicious and censorious of others, and of themselves more conceited. They may possess more money, more knowledge of their neighbours, more acquaintances, but not more grace.

No. LXXXV.—Afflictions.

Afflictions are, to believers, "grievous, for the present," in different degrees, as "chastisements," expressive of parental care of their souls, and displeasure against their sins. Believers are "exercised thereby;" instructed, disciplined, trained. The rod enforces instruction. They are exercised in learning important lessons. The vanity of the world, the evil of sin, the shortness of life, the sinfulness of the heart, the omissions of duty of which we have been guilty, the suitableness of the promises, the necessity of the spirit, the malice of satan, the glory of Christ's salvation the worth of health, the faithfulness of God, the degree of our grace, the connection of providential dispensations with spiritual operations, the wisdom and love of God to elect and redeem souls, the unutterable value of the soul, and the pre-eminence of eternity to time, are some of the lessons taught by this salutary exercise.

No. LXXXVI.—Trials.

It is one part of spiritual wisdom to *improve* rather than *complain* of present trials. If, without a trial, we are secure and indolent, trials are, in our fallen state, natural and necessary. This we readily admit, and object not to a trial, except the *present* one; any thing but this I could endure.

Two good men, travelling to visit a friend, often complained that the *dust* was so exceedingly troublesome, and longed to arrive at the beautiful pasture-grounds of the friend to whom they were going. Not long after they entered the first beautiful field, a number of flies stung the horse and rendered him unmanageable. "Ah!" said dear Mr. Cecil, ever ready to every good word, "I suppose we must expect the dust or the fly in every place. In the road, we longed for the field,—but did not see the fly."

Let us therefore remember, that trials await us in every place, in every state, in every relation of life. Instead of expecting an exemption by any outward change, let us be as happy and useful as possible, in present circumstances.

No. LXXXVII.—Backsliding.

Whilst *good* men are anxious to know, whether they are *backsliders*, or are in an *unconverted state*, Satan often takes an advantage of this frame of mind: First, he leads them to conclude, from past experience, that they *have been converted* to God; and from this, tempts them to conclude, that whatever *degrees* of guilt they contract, and *how long* soever they continue in sin, they *must* be restored, because God's love to them is unchangeable. What awful delusion! What evidence can they possess of God's love to them, while under the reign of guilt and sin? Ought they not to doubt their *conversion* to God? How many have deceived themselves—"held fast deceit"—until the "light within them was darkness;" their consciences were seared, their affections joined to idols, until they "died in their sins." Or, *secondly*, they have been left to fall into outward sin—were cast out of the affections of God's children—they gave up their profession, and died in presumption or despair.

A *third* class, with a false assurance of their interest in the electing love of God, the redemption of Christ, and the supposed work of the spirit in conversion, have indulged a false hope, that sooner or later, God was *obliged* to restore them, or forfeit his faithfulness: or they have imagined that his design, in permitting them to fall so awfully, was to glorify his *abounding* grace; and then dreamed of mercy in their false peace, until the light of eternity undeceived them!

If the enemy of souls cannot support this persuasion, that they were converted to God, he may suggest to them, they are *hypocrites*; that they never "knew the grace of God in truth;" that they are not of the number of the elect; that all their efforts are vain; and so fill them with despair of salvation.

These facts prove, that to depend on *past experience* of converting grace, *whilst continuing in sin*, is "the snare of the Devil," of the most dangerous tendency. The safer way is to treat with ourselves, as the Apostle did with the Galatians: "He stood in doubt of them. And in such a state we should "stand in doubt" of ourselves; and apply to God, as sinners, by repentance, faith, and prayer, crying, "Turn THOU me; and I shall be turned or converted."

But as an unconverted professor may be *a backslider*, he should come to God, sensible of his *aggravated* sin, of backsliding from his *profession*, his *resolutions*, his *convictions*, and attention to *the means* of grace. He has *gone back* from his *former conversation*, his acknowledgment of the value of his soul, and the importance of salvation. He has stifled his convictions, worn out his impressions of hell, of heaven, of sin, of Christ, and of eternity. "His last state is worse, *more guilty* than his first;" and he must confess it, and plead, "Lord pardon my iniquity, though it is GREAT!" He must come to God, not as an awakened *heathen*, an awakened *publican*, or *harlot*; but as under the additional guilt of abusing past advantages: and for such returning to God, "there is forgiveness and plenteous redemption."

The difficulty of a *backslider*, in approaching God for mercy, is greater than that of *a sinner under his first convictions*. It is true, the backsliding christian has more enlightened and enlarged views of the grace and mercy of God; the efficacy of a Redeemer's *atonement* and *intercession*; the influence of divine *invitations* and *promises*: but then, he perceives and feels his guilt, proportionably aggravated, by his *knowledge* and *experience*!

When David repented of his sin, although aggravated by every consideration that could provoke God, or tempt himself to despair, the same mercy which sent the prophet Nathan to *reprove* him by a parable, and to lead him to *accuse* and *condemn himself*, sent the same prophet with a token of reconciliation!

"He sent by the mouth of Nathan the prophet, and he called his next child's name Jedidiah, that is, beloved of the Lord." And it is added, this name was given "because of the Lord:" that is, because of his grace and mercy to the father and mother, and his love to the child. What backslider's heart on reading this, does not melt, and hope, and pray and praise?

No. LXXXVIII.—Death of Infants.

The death of infants proves that original, not actual sin, is imputed to them.

It should regulate our affections to our offspring—moderate our anxious cares for their future wants in this world,—excite our prayers for them in early life,—render our surrender of them in baptism, solemn and unfeigned, cherish our submission to providence, prevent our estimating the divine regard by outward events.

On the death of young ——, twelve years of age, seized suddenly with an inflammation in his arm—the disease rapidly increased, reached his brain, and destroyed his life,—Learn,—

1. The value of parental and early instruction. He confessed, that his life and heart were sinful. He felt his condition and in intervals of reason, cried for mercy.

2. The importance of sunday schools, and of accustoming our children to attend the word of God.

3. The folly and danger of delaying to seek the salvation of the soul.

4. The importance of placing children where they can have access to the means of grace.

5. The wisdom and kindness of God, in his counsel to the young. Eccl. xii. 1; Mat. vi. 33.

6. The folly of neglecting present and presuming on future time. Health, means, reason, life—all are uncertain.

7. The duty and privilege of parents, in dedicating their children to God:—by instruction,—example,—discipline,—prayer,—baptism.

8. The awful condition of ignorant and careless children and youth!

No. LXXXIX.—Looking to Jesus.

The enemy of souls diverts us from looking to Jesus, in a manner which conceals his art.

He directs us to look *only* at our *sins*, Ps. xl. 12., that we may despair of mercy. To *apostles*, that we may despair of persevering. To our *imperfect duties*, to bring us into bondage. To the *frame* of the heart, to make us rise, or sink, by a life of *feeling*. To *Providence*: and walk by sensible appearances, for or against us. To the *Saints*, in their *excellences* to discourage us, or their singular *convictions*, as a standard; at their *assurance* to persuade us we have no faith, or to their *faults*, to imitate them, or doubt the *reality* of religion. Or Satan may fix our eyes on the *world*, and ask us what is to become of the people in it? On its allurements, to entice, or its oppositions, to intimidate; but the christian's distinguishing

duty and privilege is, to be continually "looking unto Jesus."—Least of all, do we suspect an enemy, when we are contemplating God in his works of creation, of providence, or in his law; but even in these instances we may be diverted from looking to Jesus. God was, is, and ever will be in Christ.

No. XC.—Excellency of the Bible.

If christians knew of one impenitent sinner at the remotest part of the globe, who did not possess a Bible, it would be their duty, if possible, to teach him some language in which he could read it: then putting the book into his hand, in the language of inspiration, assure him "these things were written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that in believing, *you* might live through his name."

When that interesting missionary Des Granges, at Vizagapatam, was dying, he was asked about what object he was most anxious. His answer was, "the translation of the scriptures!" The word of God corresponds to his character. Holiness and justice, truth and faithfulness, sovereign authority, patience and goodness, mercy and grace, wisdom and blessedness, constitute his character; and these are the excellences it displays and requires. These are commanded and enforced by precepts and promises, doctrines and threatenings, counsels and example.

The word of God is *real* truth, in opposition to error, deceit, and falsehood. It is not a phantom, an imagination, or a shadow of truth; it is "the truth." Error is mutable and various; it assumes various forms and semblances; but the bible is truth,—pure and unchangeable truth. It is also *spiritual* truth, and, therefore, the *most important*, as adapted to the spirit and spiritual wants of fallen man. The sciences provide for our temporal accommodation; they contain natural, philosophical, and political truth: but the gospel promises deliverance from spiritual evils and blessings—spiritual in their nature, tendency and design. It enjoins spiritual dispositions and aims; spiritual conversation and conduct; spiritual worship and enjoyments; spiritual principles, conflicts and ends. Instead of rank, wealth, honour, and ease, it exhibits knowledge, faith, holiness, pardon, peace, intercourse with God, love to Jesus, imitation of him, victory over sin, satan, self, the world and death; and the prospect of eternal life to our desires, hopes, and pursuits. As "the ministration of the spirit," it is designed to render us "spiritually minded." It forms a spiritual taste, excites spiritual thoughts, and inspires spiritual affections. The cares it produceth, refer to "the one thing needful;" and this regulates the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the self-denial and exertions of "the spiritual man."

No. XCI.—Brotherly Love.

Necessity is one bond of society; but brotherly love greatly strengthens that union, which is formed by necessity.

We are partakers of one nature, the same rational powers, with similar inclinations and affections. "Of one blood."

Our advantages and disadvantages are similar.

Brotherly love has the best influence on civil society. Prevents craft, and violence. It will render the conduct open, just, kind, and peaceable. It shields society from fraud, injustice and discord.

It unites us as christians.

It prevents that envy and revenge, that hypocrisy, which *loves* only in soft words, and a fair address. It bears, forbears, forgives. It is tender of character, of peace and prosperity. The principles, and motives of christians are peculiar to themselves.

No. XCII.—On the Resurrection.

The gospel reveals the doctrine of the resurrection to us, as a matter of fact. The body must rise again; it must become a body which shall be no clog to devotion, no snare to integrity, no source of disease and pain, no seat of mortal qualities. What surprising monuments of divine power and grace will such *bodies* be!

No. XCIII.—God's Voice in Death.

In funeral orations, as they are called, the law of custom obliges ministers to comfort them that mourn. The addresses at the grave, of course, breathes nothing but consolation.—But are ministers right in this uniformity of design? has God but *one* design in painful dispensations? and are we sure that we concur with his design, by insisting on consolatory hopes only. Our design, as ministers, ought to be, to *interpret* the dispensation. The Lord's voice calleth to the family; and to him and his voice we should direct the attention of the mourners. It is the Lord's hand that "takes away" our relatives and friends; and, in so doing, strikes *us*. We should endeavour to discern, acknowledge, and submit to him in the dispensation.

> "'Tis God that lifts our comforts high,
> Or sinks them in the grave."

In such seasons, we are called to self-inquiry, to "great searchings of heart," to "search and try our ways." We are then summoned to enter into judgment with ourselves; "to bring our sins to remembrance," to "humble ourselves, under the mighty hand of God." To what *sin* does the finger of God point? What lesson does he design to teach us? What error is he correcting? Perhaps

he intends to awaken *sympathy* for others whose sufferings we have neglected, to subdue some *carnal affection* we have indulged, to arm us against temptation, to qualify us for peculiar usefulness, or prepare us to glorify God in some greater trial of our faith and patience. Or, whilst some object is removed which we loved too much, we are taught the worth of some mercy which we valued too little, Possibly, God may have "spoken once, yea twice," in former dispensations, and we "perceived it not," but "despised the chastening of the Lord." If so, we must not wonder, that God should speak with a louder voice and strike with a heavier hand, to "open our ears, and seal instruction" on our minds. And if we have rashly censured others under the cross, and boasted of our own strength, we are by a suitable trial, called to repent of our severity and presumption, by learning a little more of "the evil and plague of our own hearts." If found under lukewarm dispositions and formal devotions, the trial may make us feel the necessity of "the power" of Godliness, "to support and improve our spirits."

No. XCIV.—Experience of Religion.

The *evidence* which a good man enjoys of the truth of the scriptures and the reality of religion, is like the evidence of the sweetness of honey, the nourishing quality of food, the pleasurable effects of the sun, or the delight occasioned by music. Should a *bad* man say *he* does not enjoy that evidence or feel such conviction, and therefore the religion is not a reality, his inference is unjust. He who has never *tasted* honey, *seen* the sun, or has *no ear* for music, *cannot* be a *judge* of either.

No. XCV.—Divine Visitations.

When God enters a careless family and smites the first-born, as one that will be heard, he calls aloud. Eph. v. 14.

With such a light, he will rouse the *sleeper*; and by his minister *death*, he will arrest the attention of him who has slighted every other minister. He takes him apart from noise and occupation into the secret and silent chamber, speaks to his heart and seals the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions!

Conscience, no longer stifled or amused, discovers the contender; and trembling before him, cries. Jer. xxxi. 18.

Here a soul marks (obtains) that gold, which the thief cannot steal; builds on that foundation which no tempest can shake; feels that life, over which death hath no power; and that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. In the wreck of human affairs, God makes his truth appear; and causes his gospel, like a plank thrown out to the perishing mariner, to be properly known and prized.

No. XCVI.—Character.

We see little of the world in which we live; we see bodies and faces, but not spirits. Yet the spirit is the MAN. In reality, therefore, we cannot see a man, but as we perceive his *very soul.* The spirits of men, are a world in a world: an invisible within a visible world. It is the SPIRIT of a man which is the seat of reigning sin, or of "the kingdom of God." Here is the seat of misery and of happiness. How little real knowledge then, do we possess! How *difficult* the attainment of self-knowledge and yet how *important!* How awful, how amazing will be the manifestations of character, at the great day!

No. XCVII.—Reading Sermons.

Reading sermons and prayers, originates in sloth and encourages it. Sermons and prayers may be bought and repeated, without study, experience or concern. Surely, this is not suitable to the divine office of an ambassador of Christ. It requires neither grace nor talents, to read the works of other men. A school-boy may do it, or even a bad man. But is this man one of the pastors or teachers, whom Christ "is exalted to give?" Is this "a pastor after God's heart?"

In what profession does equal indolence prevail? On the bench, where property, liberty and life are concerned, the judge does not *read* but *speak* his address to the jury, to the accused, and to the accuser. At the bar, the advocate pleads, answers objections, conciliates, persuades, as one who understands and feels for, his client. In the senate, whether men be actuated by love of their country, by party-zeal, by vanity, by love of place, or any other motive, they *speak*, not read. And even on the stage, the *actor* would not be heard in a *well-read* address, however good the composition. No, *he* speaks from memory, and from the heart, as one that would engage and impress his hearers. What a reproach to the minister who *idly reads* the compositions of others, or even sermons of his own composing!

Garrick was once asked, to account for the *faint impressions* made by many preachers on their audience, considering the advantages they possesed in the importance of their subject, when he and other speakers on the stage, could fix the attention and command the heart, with subjects infinitely inferior. "Because," answered Garrick, "preachers deliver truth, as if they believed it false; and we deliver fictions, as if we believed them to be true!"

Distrust of God, induces a disposition to read rather than preach. A corrupt custom forms and strengthens a vicious taste; and therefore many ministers and hearers prefer reading to preaching.—

When a minister reads, because he is afraid of offending this taste for reading sermons, he proves that "the fear of man bringeth a snare." Let a minister live, walk and preach "in the Spirit," and he will not fulfil "this lust of the flesh."

Pride, a principle opposed to faith, has no small share in this practice. This principle paralizes a "concern to preach Christ," and convert souls, by raising a concern to shine as a scholar; to please and astonish by long periods, high style, smooth sentences, and ingenious thoughts.

What would *conscience* say to the minister, who, after drawing the attention of his hearers to himself rather than to Christ, should have occasion to quote the declaration "we preach not ourselves; but Christ Jesus, the Lord?"

Reading, instead of preaching sermons, is also supported by *the opportunity it affords to graceless persons* to become ministers. Were thousands of such men obliged to study, and preach their sermons, instead of copying and reading the sermons of others, the door would be shut against them. Thousands of Arians, Socinians, and mere moral preachers, would be prevented from entering the pulpit; and men of scriptural knowledge, experimental wisdom, "the gift of utterance," and ardent zeal, would be encouraged to occupy their places, and "speak the truth in love."

The disadvantages of this method to the minister and hearers, are many and great.

Should he lose his *notes*, as has been the case, the people cannot expect a sermon. Such a minister is ill-qualified to preach in the evening; and if his eyes grow dim, he will read with pain to himself and his hearers. If the *subject* be committed to memory, after being well digested, a man feels the *weight* of it. In the reader, the *book* is full of the subject; in the speaker, the *soul* is filled with it. The reader's eyes are on the *book*; the preacher's on the *people*. One uses his eyes and his tongue; and his exertions may be merely *mechanical*; the other puts his *heart* into his *sermon*, and gives both to his *hearers*. Whatever solemn, unexpected occasion presents itself, the mere *reader* of sermons and prayers cannot adapt either to it, by a train of thought, or by various aspects of truth, different from those contained in his book.

A solemn providence may render the sermon in the minister's pocket unseasonable, at least without some addition or alteration: still his faculties are confined, his thoughts and expressions bounded, and his feelings counteracted by this slavish practice.

No. XCVIII.—The Prayerless.

When a man avoids speaking to his neighbour, we suspect some secret ill-will concealed as the cause. Is not that man an enemy

against God, who is not on *speaking*-terms with him? Are you a prayerless man? And is not that man an enemy to his *own soul* who never speaks to it? Never asks his soul if it be well? Never says, soul! art thou *converted* to *Christ?* Art thou *saved* from thy *sins? Has* it been well with thee? Is it *now* well with thee? *Would* it be well with thee for ever,—if *this* night dismissed from the body? Canst thou answer, as a female did this morning (May 23rd, 1813), on my asking, how is it with *you?* "Well," she exclaimed, with a smile, "*well;*—in body and soul!"

No. XCIX.—Breviary of the Gospel.

The Gospel is a system of TRUTH: divine, pure, revealed, suitable and interesting truth. The truth, "as it is in Jesus;" discoveries of the nature, attributes, and providence of God. Redemption! forgiveness! the Holy Spirit! eternal life!

Truth in the type, prophecy, promise, the Saviour, and *in his people.*

The Gospel is a system of GRACE. The law is *truth*, not *grace*, John i. 17; 1 Tim. i. 15; Ps. cxxx. 4; forgiveness with God---what *grace!* and it is true!—Witness the promises and privileges of the Gospel.

The Gospel is a system of DISCIPLINE teaching self-government—subordination in relative, social, and public life. Purity, meekness, kindness, sympathy, mercy, temperance, justice, liberality, peace, and contentment are its fruits.

The Gospel is a system of HAPPINESS. It relieves us here by pardon, power, and prospects of life—life to the body and soul; "*life eternal!*" Bodies---like that of Jesus. No clog to devotion—no snare to integrity—no source of pain and disorder—no seat of death. Bodies shining as stars.

As "the Gospel of salvation," it is a deliverance from the tyranny of Satan, from the reign of ignorance, from the dominion of guilt and from the empire of evil passions."

The Gospel is a DIVINE system.

Its *Author*, is "the blessed God."

Its *Source*, the grace of God.

Its *discoveries*, the things of God.

Its *evidences*, the effects of the power of God.

Its *model*, or pattern, the Son of God.

Its *triumphs*, supernatural.

Its *genius*, spiritual.

Its *scope*, salvation to man—glory to God.

No. C.—A Death-bed.

I visited Mrs. —— in her affliction, so threatening, that she took her leave of her husband and children every evening as her last. And although I never knew a family more affectionate, nor a more reserved Christian than this good woman, I never saw a soul more raised above the distressing effects of *relative affection*. She resigned her family to God, calmly waited her dismission, rejoicing in hope. Her conscience entirely relieved from guilt; her affections weaned from life; her hopes centred in Jesus; her tongue expressing patience, gratitude, and joy; her countenance was "as the face of an angel." "O the blessedness of the *woman* to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile!" Here was a soul in full triumph over the world, life, sin, self, fear, death, Satan, her own imperfections, and her afflictions! I departed from her bed-side secretly exclaiming, her religion is a reality, the grace of Christ is sufficient—God is faithful to his promises—prayer is not a vain thing; rouse my soul! pray, believe, read, act, live on Jesus, live to God, and die in faith.

In the meantime, let me anxiously visit the afflicted, and if they do not feel the need of my counsel and prayers, let me learn to live, to suffer, to die, to pray, and preach. Here I learn my defects, the pains and pleasures of sympathy in their joys and sorrows. Here I see heaven opened, the veil rent, and the prospects of heaven filling the soul with "unspeakable joys!" Here I see death killed, "swallowed up of life." Here I have seen "the kingdom of heaven;" the glory of the Lord revealed, "Christ all in all."

No. CI.—Secret things unrevealed.

How does God exist—how did he create the world—how is he immense without extension, or eternal without succession?

Answer—It is not revealed.

How are souls united to bodies—how do they enter them—how do they operate on them?

Answer—It is not revealed. These are "secret things which belong to God."

No. CII.—The coming of the Bridegroom.

"Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!"

Many are not prepared to go forth this day to meet him in his ordinances, to rejoice in the union of Jesus and his church, to pay him the service he demands and deserves, and to partake of the entertainments prepared by him.

Can such be ready to meet Jesus in death? Is not death

near, and *hastening* towards us? Must not such souls be startled and terrified, if it should come *suddenly*? And yet Jesus has threatened the unwatchful soul *so* to come.

How awful the surprise to the secure sinner! how distressing to the dreaming formalist! how degrading and alarming even to the real believer, if found sleeping

No. CIII.—PRAYER.

Prayer is a privilege of *inconceivable importance*. No one, whose soul is not "alive to God," can form an idea of it; and yet, to the truly spiritual mind, nothing is more *simple* in its nature. And what is prayer? The "cry" of a creature in distress, or in want, or danger,—to God for relief, support, or protection. A criminal asking pardon; a slave asking for liberty; a perplexed man asking counsel; a beggar asking alms; a child asking bread. Can any act be more simple? Can any act be more solemn, in a creature, than that of speaking to his maker? How did Abraham feel, in his approaches to God? Abraham was "the FRIEND of God!" Hear him: "O let not the Lord be angry, and I, who am but dust and ashes, will yet speak." *Angry?* with the *request* of a *Friend?* What an exalted thought of the glory and purity of God! What humbling views of himself! After this, who can endure to hear the low familiarity, the irreverence, the levity, the impudence called boldness, expressed by some persons in prayer? Equally distant from a suitable posture of soul, is that man, who, before his fellow creatures, seems to display the prayer of a gentleman,—a scholar,—or an orator, rather than that of a christian. To say *fine* things of God, as if he could be pleased with compliments; to teach his fellow-creatures when he should be imploring blessings for them; to set off his own understanding and memory, rather than "pour out his heart" to the Lord:—is this prayer? A man may pray to exalt himself, as well as "preach himself." For my own part, I hear such prayers with pain and disgust; but the simple cry of "Lord help me,"—"God be merciful to me a sinner," breathed from the *heart* of an unlettered christian, edifies, elevates, and charms me.

When I hear a Christian in prayer, filling his mouth with arguments from "*the Word of God*," it greatly increases my happiness; for "it drops as the rain and distils as the dew," on my soul. As a minister, I am encouraged that my ministry leads to the study of the Scriptures. I am enlivened as a Christian; "the word quickeneth me." I am relieved from the dull quotation of a few petitions from the Prayer-book, for years in succession, which proclaims idleness and barrenness.

Such persons improve others while their "own profiting appears to all." They "stir up the gift that is in them," and attend to prayer as a serious business. Kindling their own affections at the

sacred altar, they feed the devotions of others by the "live coals" taken from thence. They spiritualise the judgment, the heart and devotions of the hearers, and "quicken them to call upon God's name."

No. CIV.—Motives Judged.

When a proud man cannot attack a minister's actions, he slanders his *motives*. This is unjust, spiteful, and awfully rash. Surely, it violates the Saviour's charge, Mat. vii. 1.

To convince such a slanderer may be difficult; but it is not difficult to confound him. Only touch the motives of his *charity*, his *religious* duties, his *commendations*, his *professions of friendship*, as ostentatious, vain, flattering, and hypocritical, and he will charge you with the presumption of invading the judgment-seat. How, he asks, can you *possibly* know my *heart*? How indeed! Why, then, partial man, dost *thou* judge the heart of thy brother? Is not this returning thine own measure and thine own judgment on thyself?

"With what judgment ye judge, YE shall be judged."

You have been reproved by your minister or brother, and you assign a *bad motive* for his reproof: and what is *your* motive for so doing? Probably, to conceal your own sin, by imputing sin to him.

Should you even guess his motive, it does not clear you; but proves your wish to *intimidate* others from reproving your faults, by resentful and unjust retaliations.

Would you "tempt the Lord" to say, "let him alone?" Or provoke him to reprove you by leaving you to disgrace your character, or sending a mortal disease on your body?

Suppose you should excite "the fear of man" in your minister, and shut his mouth, will it not render you a partaker of *his unfaithfulness*?

If you do not make restitution by revoking your rash judgment, do you not fix *guilt* on your conscience and destroy your own *peace*?

"He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy;" can you expect to find mercy without confessing your fault to your brother?

Suppose the motive you impute to your reprover be false, have you not added to this fault the sin of *slander*? Will not this "sin find you out," by the slanders of others against you, the prejudices of the injured, the retaliations of him and his friends, and the torments of conscience, in your enjoyments, your afflictions, and the awful terrors of death?

I am, at this moment, inclined to write on the most glorious truth of the gospel; but, alas! the unjust and unkind treatment of a fellow-creature gives a bias to my mind, and would lead it to vent its complaints of human nature. Could I describe a fallen creature,—a fallen

creature in his converted state,—a fallen creature in all the forms of hypocritical profession,—I should do no more than the Holy Spirit has already performed. And were I to illustrate the most interesting and sublime truths of revelation, in all their happy influence on Christian experience, I should only repeat what is already recorded. Why then write? why burden society instead of recommending the Bible? "In writing many books there is no end; and much *reading* is a weariness to the flesh."

No. CV.—The Bible Society.

The Bible Society harmonizes with every other benevolent institution.

The systems of education for teaching children and aged persons to *read*, derive their principal importance from the qualification they impart to search and understand the Word of God. Each institution contributes to make men "wise unto salvation, by faith in Christ Jesus." This is the grand end of learning to read—of multiplying Bibles, and of preaching the Gospel. And the Bible Society itself, so pre-eminent in importance, prepares the minds of men for *missionary* exertions.

It is true, the preaching of the Gospel is the principal means of saving souls; and millions have heard and believed the word preached, who could not procure a Bible, or read one if they had it. Happy people, to whom we can say, "To you is the word of this salvation sent." This ordinance of teaching is of universal importance;—"Go ye into all the world, and PREACH the Gospel to EVERY CREATURE." "For whosoever shall CALL on the name of the Lord, shall be SAVED! But how shall they call on him, in whom they have not BELIEVED? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not HEARD? And how shall they hear without a PREACHER? And how shall *he* preach, except *he* be SENT?" I would not run to the extremes of those whose judgments are misled by the *novelty* of a plan. Such persons exclaim, according to the impulse of the moment—"The Adult School is the best thing in the world!"

One year before the institution of schools for teaching aged persons, they exclaimed, "Sunday-schools for teaching children to read and catechising them, are the best institutions of the day!" Let the same persons attend the anniversary meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and hear the report of its extensive influence, and they return home, exclaiming, the *Bible* Society is the most important institution in the world! The same good men, after reading the report of the Missionary Society, and hearing the sermons and speeches of its advocates, are impressed with the *superior* worth of the Missionary Society.

It is evident that these good men are pleased with every one of these benevolent societies, and desire to assist all of them, although they may not be able to estimate their *relative* importance. The Missionary Society has given birth to them all,—they are all its offspring, and they are all subservient to it, and have been pushed into motion by it, as the various wheels in a watch are moved by the main-spring.

And the word of God itself, asserts the unutterable importance of preaching, even to those who have not Bibles, and could not read them if they had. They might even then hear; and their souls might live! Hence the charge, "PREACH the gospel to every creature—preach the word, in season and out of season." "It pleases God by the foolishness of PREACHING, to save them that believe." "The gospel of the kingdom shall be *preached* in all the world." "And Jesus went through all the cities and villages PREACHING the gospel of the kingdom."

But how shall the hearers "try the spirits" of the preachers and their doctrine, "whether they are of God," without Bibles? To this "law and testimony," they must bring every sermon, every book and speech on divinity; and if they do not agree with "the analogy of faith," it is because "there is no light in them."

"This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail;
Our guide to everlasting life,
Through all this gloomy vale."

The Bereans are commended for trying the sermons they heard even from the APOSTLES themselves. "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures daily, to see if these things were so." And if they are praised by an inspired writer, for not receiving his sermons without examining by the written word, how awfully negligent are those hearers, that receive the sermons of *uninspired* preachers without examination!

The Bible Society is animated by a spirit of *liberality*. It does not require the subjects of its good wishes to be wise unto salvation without generously imparting the *means*, "the *word* of wisdom."

Its liberality is *extensive* as the habitable globe; it reaches to "every nation, tongue, kindred and people." It is limited only by the prophecies and promises of God. It says of the Redeemer, "His name shall be great among the Heathen. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. His name shall be great." This society, like the sun, is as a "bridegroom, going out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man, to run his race." This liberality begins at *home;* but does not *end* there. It is broad as the earth, wide as the sea, bright as the day, deep as the misery of fallen man, high as heaven, and its consequences durable as eternity!

The *scope* of its liberality is grand; aiming at the salvation of man, and the glory of God. It designs the reconciliation of man

to God; the reconciliation of man to man; the reconciliation of man to himself, in the exercise of the purest principles, and the pursuit of his highest interests.

Its liberality is *pure* and *self-denying*.

In a season of protracted war, when the taxes of the country were unusually heavy, it multiplied its gifts and its exertions.—Feeling its necessities, it overlooked them, believing the testimony of the Saviour, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Sacrificing the prejudices and party designs of each community, it unites, it becomes one body; and like the sun, diffuses the beams of knowledge, in every direction; "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

The liberality of the Bible Society is *divine*, in its *origin*, its *operation* and its *end*. God is its author, his goodness is its *source*, divine power renders it "more than a conqueror," over every objection and impediment; and its end embraces "the barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, male and female;" shedding its influence on "the just and unjust;" turning the wilderness into the garden of the Lord. It "opens rivers in high places," and makes "the inhabitants of the rock sing." Hear its voice, "as the voice of many waters."

"From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the CREATOR's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung,
Through every land, by every tongue."

The Bible Society, is as liberal in its spirit and principle, as in its property. It requires no man to *change* his sentiments in religion, or even to *conceal* them. It does not seal up the mouth of any member, but allows him to present a Bible to the ignorant without "forbidding him to *speak* to the Gentiles, that they may be saved." You may *comment* on the Bible; but not *print* your comment with it. Devoutly wishing the Bible may not only be *read*, but *understood*, it does not forbid you to explain, to reason, to invite and encourage.

This society is as liberal in its *operation*, as in its principle. In the members which compose it, in the committees which transact its business, and in the secretaries which write for it. The churchman and the dissenter are equal in office, in labour, in sacrifices, in pecuniary aid, in affection, one to another, and in zeal to promote the success of this cause of God—this cause of man—this cause of revealed truth.

No. CVI.—FLATTERY.

"Life and death are in the power of the tongue:" it wounds and heals; it kills by false witness, and saves by truth; for "a faithful witness delivereth souls."

The tongue kills by *flattery*; it deceives—makes a *tool* of the party flattered; raises a dangerous *confidence* in the flatterer, and makes the dupe of flattery an instrument of injustice and cruelty. Flatter any man's sins, and you may rouse his anger against a faithful *reprover*, when he ought to feel indignation against *himself*. Flatter a man when you ought to reprove him, and you feed his pride, make him contentious and resentful, and prevent his repentance.

Weak minds believe all the flatterer says, and strong ones are too often subdued by it.

A man of the world, wishing for the assistance of a professor of religion, who happens to possess *property* and *loves praise*, has only to flatter the vain creature for his liberality, his usefulness, his integrity, his piety, or his general character, and, perhaps, the professor is gradually drawn into the spirit, the society, and maxims of the world!—So true are Solomon's words: "He that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a NET for his feet." Preachers frequently flatter their hearers, especially their *rich* hearers, from motives of *fear*, lest they should withdraw their patronage and subscription from them; or, from *covetousness*, expecting a reward for "preaching smooth things," and supporting their favourite opinions. *Distrusting* God, to provide for them and their families, they trust in *man*, at whose *sins* they connive, whose sins they flatter as virtues, and whose virtues they magnify into superlative excellences. *Proud* of the friendship of rich men, and loving their *praise*, they accommodate their sermons and conversation to their passions.

Happy minister, who can adopt the words of the apostle: "Neither at any time used we flattering words"; 1 Thes. ii. 5. Those who flatter men, will flatter God also, like the hypocrites among the Israelites. What! can any one imagine God can be pleased or deceived by flattery? Yes, they "think God is altogether such an one as *themselves!*"—Ps. i. 21.

In their distress they flatter HIM with praises, prayers, vows, and tears. They pretend to repentance, humility, sincerity, devotion, love to the bible, the Lord's day, the ordinances, and people of God: but the Psalmist's words are descriptive of their characters, as their deliverance often proves: "Nevertheless they did but FLATTER him with their mouth, and LIED to him with their tongue."

No. CVII.—PRAISE.

"As the fining-pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise."—Prov. xxvii. 21; xvii. 3.

Praise, true or false, tries the character. If *false*, it humbles a good man, who is conscious he is not what he ought to be, and what many deem him to be. If *true* or sincere, he is not elated, but grateful to God and encouraged to duty.

No. CVIII.—Mercy.

How different is *mercy* in God and man!—different in its *objects:* men pardon the *least guilty causes;* some circumstance relating to the person transgressing, moves their mercy.

In its *manner* how different! Men pardon when the offender repents and asks forgiveness.

God pardons *the most guilty*; not for their repentance, but to induce it. God cannot be excited by any thing without himself; all depends on his own will.

No. CIX.—Experimental Preaching.

Proud scholars complain of the cant, enthusiasm, and nonsense of *illiterate preachers;* and of the folly of thousands who have patience to *hear* them.

They may complain; whilst a man of sound understanding, scriptural knowledge, and religious experience, preaches to men's HEARTS, he will be preferred, by serious minds, to those preachers who address the understanding *only*.

On leaving * * *, the other evening, a genteel man addressed me with tears: "God bless you, sir, in your soul and body, your family and your labours." I had reached his *heart*, described his perplexities, and instantly relieved him. This was the spring of his good wishes for me.

The next day, I preached at * * * * * *. After sermon a decent woman took me by the hand, and exclaimed, "I bless God for your experimental sermon; it reached my heart, described my bondage, and proclaimed liberty to my captive soul."

No. CX —Support of Ministers.

The benefits conferred on a Minister of the Gospel, return in another shape, to the advantage of those who confer them.

What are necessaries?

1. The decencies of life, house, food, cloathing, furniture; comforts.

2. The charities in which he should assist, without diminishing the supplies of his family.

3. The benevolences which he might bestow on others, besides his immediate charge, to the credit of his hearers.

4. The education of his children; his sons liberally; his daughters reputably.

5. The means of study:—The clouds must first imbibe the vapour

which they shed in fruitful showers on the earth. If the earth refuse this vapour; if the sea tenaciously hold its own;—farewell fertility.

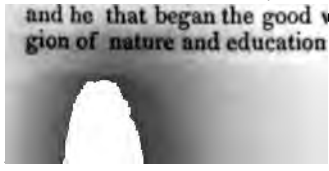
We plead not for the gay, the profane, the indifferent, the inconsiderate, the lazy, or the stupid; much less for the headstrong, the hypocritical or the immoral.

Taken as a whole, what profession is less adequately paid?

No. CXI.—False Peace.

If it be asked, how antinomians support their minds while hoping for salvation and living without salvation from sin, the question is easily answered. They flatter themselves that their *creed* is more sound than that of their neighbours. They are more *orthodox*, or sound in sentiment. They call their *sentiments evangelical*, whilst their *tempers* are malignant, covetous, sensual, or proud. Their conduct is unjust, their conversation slanderous. They talk much of the *blood* of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the love of Christ to sinners; and neglect his spirit, his commands, and his example. They speak of *experience*, of *feelings*, of faith, comfort and joy. They substitute the *gift* of prayer, for the *grace* of prayer:—rail against satan and self-righteousness, as if these two were the *only* enemies of a christian. They declaim against socinians, arians and arminians, but are silent on antinomians. They love to hear of Christ dying for the *ungodly*, justifying the *ungodly*, pardoning and saving the *ungodly*; but are silent on *regeneration*, *holiness*, *progressive sanctification*, *self-denial*, *spirituality of mind*, and a *conversation becoming the gospel*. Or, if they discourse on *conversion*, they confine the term to *opinion* or *sentiment*:—a mere change in their *views* of divine truth; not in the temper and spirit of the mind.

They despise the doubtful and fearful mind, as carnal, legal, self-righteous; and flatter themselves as enlightened, calvinistic and evangelical. Instead of judging themselves, they sit in judgment on sermons and characters. One sermon is not clear, a second is legal, a third is neither law nor gospel, but what are they? The elect, the dear people of God, believers! And what is their *faith*? A good opinion of themselves, presumption of their safe condition, which neither ministers, satan, nor even *sin* can shake, much less cure. They date their conversion from a change of sentiment, indulge some besetting sin, and whilst they change from bad to worse, presume on the grace of God, his unchangeable love, and the merits of Christ to save them. They were converted years ago, and he that began the good work will finish it! All this is the religion of nature and education without one gracious principle.



No. CXII.—Success no Test.

It is usual with professors of religion in their contentions against and separations from each other, for each party to assert, that their cause is of God. This often has its source in ignorance, self-love, prejudice and passion. No peace or hope of a blessing can be enjoyed without the divine blessing; nor can character be sustained, if God be visibly against us.

But what is intended by this assertion, our cause is of God?

God may permit us to succeed in our plan, in judgment; by giving us up to walk in the way of our own hearts, counsels, and lusts. "Success is God's blessing on a good cause; and his curse on a bad one."

God may permit persons to succeed to a degree and for a time, to punish the pride of one, the covetousness of a second, the injustice and falsehood of a third, the artifice and sensuality of another.

He may permit several to withdraw from a church, to deprive them of abused privileges, and to remove stumbling blocks from the society, which their conduct had disgraced: for, "next to the loss of God's presence, is the judgment of being cast out of the affections of God's people."

Or, whilst "the only wise God," permits a person or faction to accomplish their design, his own design may be to exalt his own grace, and cover the instruments with shame. And the same trial which occasions the loss of several members and considerable property to the church, may multiply the members and increase their gifts, graces, and usefulness. But an individual or several persons united, in affirming their cause to be of God, may mean, that God *approves* their characters and plans; and disapproves of those they censure and oppose. Such persons ought to be certain of the purity of their motives and conduct; the clearness of the path of duty; the evidence of a providential call; the spirituality of their dispositions, and the justificatiou of their pursuits on scriptural reasons. Should they "deceive themselves," in being actuated by malevolent passions; by a desire to escape examination and just reproof; by resentment of the faithfulness of the minister and the church; by a desire to exalt themselves and degrade others; by a party spirit; by a knavish attempt to cover their sins, or promote their worldly interests; the cause may be of God, to manifest their real characters and punish their hypocrisy. Such persons may come under the charge and consequences of the following words,—"Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as THYSELF; but I will reprove thee; and set thy sins in order before thee!"

The true signs that our cause is of God, are,—First, deliberation, caution, fear of taking a false step.

Secondly,—Diligence and impartiality in seeking advice.

disappoint his hope, and you kindle his resentment. If his secret, prevailing sin, is struck at by a faithful ministry, he vents his complaints of personality in the preacher. Should he find himself in the minority at a church meeting, he accuses the church of partiality, of arbitrary decisions, and of acting under the influence of others. Should the church continue "stedfast and immoveable" in its prompt and firm resistance of sin, he charges it with cruelty and obstinacy, and withdraws from its communion; and seeks society among antinomian professors and the men of the world. Thus, by faithful discipline, "the fruitless branch," is pruned off; by "the fan" of a faithful ministry, the chaff is separated. And as these "tares" are rooted by blood, interest, friendship, in the affections of some real christians, some of the *wheat* may for a time be separated with them. This is an evil attendant on all christian societies in this imperfect state,—proves a trial to the church, and a snare to weak minds. But the connivance at public sin is an evil much greater, as "one such sinner destroys much good." "Put away from you that evil person," saith the apostle; for, "a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump." If, therefore, the minister and the church would be "as God's mouth; they must separate the precious from the vile."

CXIV.—Books.

You say there are too many books published. True: but you are not obliged to read them. Some are read with a desire to be impressed and improved. Some, from conceit or covetousness, write too much to be read; others write too little, from the fear of writing in vain.

CXV.—Reviewing.

It is not a little mortifying to read ten or twelve pages in a book, named "a review," expecting to find the excellences and defects of the author; and to find, instead of critical remarks on the *book* or *pamphlet, an essay of the reviewer's* on the subject! I am gratified by the sentiments of the reviewer; but I expect *his judgment on the work*; not a *new* work of his own; much less, his essay *only*. It is not sufficient to recommend a work: the improvement of the reader, by assisting him to form *a just estimate* of the work reviewed, should be the scope of the reviewer. A false candour, which conceals the faults of an author, and an unjust severity, which magnifies them, has an equal tendency to mislead the understanding; and, if the observation of the late Mr. R. Robinson, of Cambridge, is near the truth, "that one half of mankind are able to find out the faults of an author, but the other half are unable to mend them," a correct

statement of the defects and merits of a book, is the more necessary in a reviewer.

I read the title of the book, think the subject interesting, and ask myself the question, shall I purchase it? The reviewer does not assist me in my decision, by a mere display of his *own* powers of writing on the subject. I may admire his talents and his views of the subject; but I expect *his views of the book;* without which, *I* am deceived and disappointed.

Let the reviewer, as far as he is able, without vanity or prejudice, favour or interest, give me *the character of the book* reviewed. This line of conduct will direct my understanding, guard my purse, and save my time. I lately read a book, written by *Honestus*, whose talents and character I greatly admired; it far exceeded my expectation, and afforded me much pleasure and profit. No thanks to two reviewers of the work; for one of them described it, in general terms, as the offspring of bigotry, and the other as a harmless child: one appears to have been actuated by prejudice, the other paralized by fear. One sacrificed the truth by misrepresentation, and the other by concealment. I am aware that impartial criticism may offend pride; but it may also humble it. "Your criticisms on my book," said an author to a reviewer, "are really *too nice*." "They cannot be *too nice*," replied the reviewer, "if they are *just*." In reading a review, after patiently travelling over six pages of introductory remarks, I exclaimed, the book! the book! as the reviewer appeared to have it before him. I soon came to the following words; "To be concluded in our next."

In one month the reviewer began *his essay* on the subject; in the next, he concluded it: I admired the whole, which displayed the talents of the writer, but not his *justice* to the reader.

No. CXVI.—Trials of Ministers.

How *many* and *various* are the trials of the Minister of Jesus Christ! Among the rest, that of seeing his utmost exertions, for the advantage of souls, attended with lukewarm indifference. He studies his discourses with unremitting labour; his cares and prayers, and studies exhaust his strength and spirit; and, painful to relate, most painful to experience, he, apparently, "labours in vain." Is there not a *cause?* he says to himself; and, supposing something in him or his church, displeasing to God, he anxiously cries, "Lord is it *I?*" and if, after the most impartial scrutiny, he finds his own aims, temper, labour, and conduct approved by God and his own conscience, he feels a growing concern, that religion might flourish in his *own* soul: for, painful as it must be, for him to see *others* lukewarm, it must be still more painful, to feel *himself* so. What can

carry him through the fatigues of study, the labours of the pulpit, the trials of indifferent coldness in his hearers, and untold temptations from Satan?—what but living near to God, himself. The greater his trials, the more urgent necessity for close communion with God. O, what a *miserable* work is the ministry of the gospel, without a warm and lively, a devout and thankful, heart! To render the work pleasant, a man must be able to say, with Gabriel, "I am a *minister*; I stand in the presence of God!"

Secondly; sometimes the minister of Jesus finds his own person disrespected by one or more of his church or subscribers. This is *mortifying* to human nature, discouraging to him in his labours; this renders him useless to such persons, and the minister fears, in proportion to the influence of such a disapproving hearer, that *others* in his church, and among his friends, will be ill-affected towards him. One moment he is tempted to *resentment*; but this will only blow up the flame, dishonour God, and render himself worthy the slight of others. The *fear* of the creature would rise up and bring a *snare* upon him. He dare not flatter their pride, nor crouch in a manner to feed ambition. What can he do? he fears *consequences!* Ah! what a near and dangerous foe to our duty, our real interest, and our peace, is *carnal sense!* Happiest christian and minister, who is most deaf to it. The minister, thus perplexed, is happily impelled to the throne of grace, "pours out his complaint before God, and shows *him* his trouble." He is led to reflect on *his special dominion*. He sees *all* hearts in his hands. He learns that the *present* path of duty must be his concern; and his mind is eased of its anxieties, by leaving *events* with God. "He commits his work to the Lord; and his *thoughts*, however confused, perplexed, and painful, are *established*." He looks *outward* too, and sees providence, with some sickness or trial, visiting the person who would otherwise injure him; or, by some unthought of restraint, or event, removing the cause of his fears, and thereby cheering his mind with a better prospect: or, if they *succeed* against him, he is endowed with more grace, and enabled to endure "the contradiction of sinners."

No. CXVII.

MEMORANDUM

ON THE

DEATH OF HIS SON, AGED SIX YEARS.

August 10th, 1796, died my dear and only son, John Cooke. Delicate in his frame, and very subject to cold and fever, we always feared, for near five years, he could not live. The hooping cough so debilitated him, from its violence and continuance, as to strengthen

our fears. But, for twelve months past, our fears have been dispersed by an apparent change, in his constitution, for the better. He was lively in his temper; became very active and healthy. My first-born, Mary, died at four years of age, with a fever, which took her off in three days. Oh! the unutterable agonies I felt when she fell.

Two years after, my amiable Betsy left the world, distracted by water on her brain. And now my dear, dear boy, has gone by the croup, or something very much like it. The last, *seemed* the greatest sufferer, as he was, for three days, at times, nearly suffocated. My dear Mary was lively and sensible; and, within the last three months of her healthy life, I thought her "born of God—" so very obedient, submissive, tender, and sincere was she, in all she said and did. Betsy was less lively in her temper, and during the first three years of her life not so sensible as Mary; but afterwards, with her indescribable sweetness of natural temper, she grew more handsome, lively, sensible, and engaging. Her countenance expressed her temper, which was all mildness, affection, and sincerity. John's natural temper was *love*: a most fond, loving child, but less healthy than the other two, till the last year. At Mary's death, I felt an anguish, which I feared would have killed me. At Betsy's, a mixture of agony and ease to see her delivered from a state of wild distraction, which, had she recovered, must have affected her for life. At John's death, my heart was glad at his relief from the miseries of all but suffocation: but, to lose a son,—an only son,—a beautiful, loving, promising son, six years of age; my companion for recreation, *within* my house, in wet and disagreeable weather; and in my garden, when the weather invited us abroad. *His* little garden, his different flowers in it, his spade, bought on purpose for him, his every thing, proves a source of painful recollection. Moments arise, in which it seems impossible to make up the loss to me and my dear wife. Yonder stands the little stick with which he took his last walk with me; but on these things I must not *dwell*, although to escape a transient review of them is impossible. I find my distressed heart too, too prone to settle on any thing which brings him to my remembrance: the heart swells and the tears flow at the memory of his best or worst days. Satan, too, is busy to thicken the gloom of every scene. He has discharged his fiery darts at me, by bringing to my recollection the instances in which I have *corrected* my child, and intimating the *cruelty* of it. But here the truth has been my shield and buckler, which says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him, *chasteneth* him *betimes*." And in some instances, too, my own *conscience* accuses me, that I have corrected him more to gratify my own will than from a sense of the evil I rebuked.

I now look back with painful regret, upon every instance [illegible] hasty word, or unkind action towards him. Love him I did [illegible]

the power of words to express; I loved him too well; and this love now occasions my grief. I am also pained that I have not *prayed* more for him, and talked more with him, about God and his soul. Satan has also insinuated a thought that the dispensation contains peculiar tokens of the Lord's displeasure. That God should take away the *eldest* child; for three successive times, and now my *son*—an *only* son—six years of age! But I know this very circumstance aggravates the *trial*, and shows the wisdom which designed it. It was *intended* for a trial, and must *therefore* cross some dear *purpose* of the heart.

This enemy tells me what he might have been. He reminds me of his tenderly affectionate temper—how he embraced me the last morning of his life; such an affection would have been a source of attention and kindness towards us in our sickness, age, and death. But, Satan,—Could any one be sure that we shall live to need it?—Or that he would have increased in this tenderness if he had lived? Are there no instances of foolish and rebellious children in the world? He was peculiarly loving in his temper; this is a reason for thankfulness, and might render him the more meek for a heaven of love.

This cruel foe haunts my imagination with pictures of his face, his smiles, his tears, his agonies, and conflicts with disease.—He points me to his little garden, where are the different flowers his own hand planted, his little spade, the stick with which he took his last walk with me. Ah! (he hints), what a sweet companion to you he was in the field, and the garden!—and in the house, how he enlivened your wintry and solitary hours? But his sufferings were comparatively short: he is better employed; and had he lived, he must have been separated by apprenticeship or something else.

But I may "sing of mercy, and judgment." I might have left him a prey to an unfriendly world. Instead of the child, the mother might have fallen; or, he might have lived, to ruin his soul and break our hearts! Or lived, to die at nine or ten years of age, without repentance, or lived to be a cripple, or an invalid the greatest part of his life.

When I observe the children of some believers, I have no reason to regret, that my dear child is in Heaven!

Not only what he might have been, but what he *was*, and what he *is*, consoles me. Yonder he is, with thousands of angels, who once were infants—himself an angel! In *this* world, he had a man's soul, in an infant's body; but now, his mind has left its prison, and is expanded into all the enjoyments of a perfect state.

I, too, have a period to all my cares, fears and anxieties, about his soul, his body, or his circumstances. Nothing can injure him, nor grieve me on his account, in his present state.

Another *strong* tie to this world is cut; and I have a new reason, to "set my affections on things above." The largest and best part

of my family are now in Heaven, "They shall not return to me; but I shall go to them!" Such are my persuasions of *their* happiness, and expectations of *meeting* them.

No. CXVIII. Errors of the Sick Poor.

Self-righteousness, or a disposition to "trust in themselves that they are righteous;" whilst destitute of faith in Christ. They trust their *own* obedience for justification, rather than "the obedience of One, by which many are made righteous." Their imaginary good works are "the sand" on which they build their hopes; rather than the atonement, righteousness and grace of Jesus. This false hope is supported, by judging themselves by an unscriptural standard.

Supposing their *best* works far exceed their own worst works, trusting to *forms* of religion without the power; rejecting experimental religion as enthusiasm or fanaticism, cant and hypocrisy, they "fail,"—come short of the grace of God. Instead of comparing their characters with the character of God, the obedience of Christ, or the perfect law. They compare themselves with the prophane, the sensual, and the unjust; and like the Pharisee, "thank God they are not as other men!"

If, however, conscience is alarmed by past sins—tears, prayers, promises of future obedience, and the sacrament, constitute the refuge, a refuge of lies which Satan sets before them. Having taken the sacrament, at the request of "a blind guide," they are lulled into a false peace, produced by a persuasion of their own goodness. They cry "peace! peace! when there is no peace."

Others are trusting their *sound creed*—without vital faith in it; or excusing their ignorance of the Gospel, by saying "I am no scholar."

Some conclude they shall be saved because they have *suffered;* or have done no harm.

Not a few expect to be saved by their *evangelical notions*, exalting themselves by their clear views of the Gospel, whilst strangers to its sanctifying influence.

Numbers ignorantly glory in having been baptized and confirmed, who have only been confirmed in their proud conceit of their own goodness.

> Who went to church proud, humbly to repent,
> And left it much more wicked than they went.

Too many persons think if they repeat the Creed, the Lord's prayer and the Ten Commandments, they shall be saved.

But the most wicked man on earth may do all this, and much more. Your creed may be good; but you may not *believe* it. You may *profess* to believe it, and often repeat the words without faith.

The apostle James says, "the devils believe and tremble."

they do not believe and repent—believe and pray; believe and trust in Christ; believe and love God; believe in Christ to make them holy.

Be not deceived; morality without faith is dead; and faith without obedience, is a dead faith.

If you believe that Christ is able and willing to save sinners, you will trust in him to pardon *your* sins, to give you repentance, to make you holy, by giving you his spirit. You will trust him to save you from your sins and temptations, to support you in trouble, to comfort you in distress, to strengthen you to obey him, to succour you in a dying hour, and to conduct you to Heaven.

Remember, your time is short, diseases may soon confine you; death approaches you every hour, and Heaven or Hell will soon receive you. This night, your soul may be required of you.

Watch therefore; for in such an hour as you think not, the son of man cometh!

No. CXIX.—Effects of Death on Man.

(This article is abridged and altered from the First Chapter of Butler's Analogy.)

All that we know from reason concerning death, is the effects it has upon animal bodies: and the frequent instances among men of the intellectual powers, continuing in high health and vigor, at the very time when a mortal disease is on the point of putting an end to all the powers of sensation, induces us to hope, that it may have no effect at all on the human soul, not even so much as to *suspend* the exercise of its faculties. And even admitting their *suspension* by death, it no more implies their *extinction*, than a sleep or a swoon. Our faculties remain undestroyed, in sleep and in a swoon, though in the latter we are not in a *capacity* to exercise them.

Death destroys the *sensible* proof of our existence. The perception or consciousness, which we have of our own existence, is indivisible, so as to imply a contradiction that one part should be here and another there, the perceptive power must be indivisible too, that is, the conscious being. Then our organized bodies, are no more part of ourselves, than any other matter around us. We might have existed in bodies differently organized, and may yet animate another body, or the same, differently modified. The dissolution of such bodies successively animated, would have no more tendency to destroy the faculties of perception and action, than the dissolution of any *foreign* matter from which we are capable of receiving impressions.

Men may lose their limbs, their organs of sense, and even the greatest part of their bodies, and yet remain the same living agents. And persons can trace up their existence to a time when the bulk of their bodies was extremely small in comparison of what it is in

mature age: they might have lost a great part of that small body and remained the same living agent. Indeed, the bodies of animals are in a constant flux, from a never ceasing attrition in every part of them. Large quantities of matter may be alienated from us, and successively change its owners, whilst each living agent remains one and the same permanent being.

According to certain laws of nature, perhaps we have *several* times lost the *whole* of our bodies, still we remain the same living agents. When we lose as great a part, or the whole, by another established law of nature, *death*, why may we not remain the same living agents? what is my nearest relation to matter? The living agent and those parts of the body, mutually affect each other.

If we consider the body as made up of organs and instruments, of perception and motion, it brings us to the same conclusion.

Optical experiments, and the assistance of sight by glasses show, that we see with our eyes in the same sense as we see with glasses; nor is there reason to believe that we see with them in any other sense, which would lead us to think the eye itself a percipient.

The like may be said of hearing, and our feeling distant solid matter by means of something in our hand.

Foreign matter, therefore, which constitutes no part of our bodies, may be instrumental in preparing objects for and conveying them to the perceiving power, in a manner similar to that by which our senses convey them. The percipient power remains, after *losing* some of our organs of sense. Dreams also prove a latent power of perceiving sensible objects in as strong and lively a manner without our external organs of sense.

The active power of the will remains the same, after the loss of a limb: it can walk by the help of an artificial leg. There is no appearance of our limbs being endued with a power of moving or directing themselves, though adapted like the several parts of a machine, to be the instruments of motion to each other. If a man determines that he will look through a microscope, or, being lame, walk to such a place with a staff,—his eyes and his feet no more determine in these cases, than the microscope and the staff. His eyes are not the seers, nor his feet the movers, in any other sense than as the microscope and the staff are so. The alienation of these instruments is not destructive to the moving agent, and we have no reason to think that we stand in any other kind of relation to any thing which we find dissolved by death.

An objection may be stated, that these observations are equally applicable to brutes. Answer—

First. If it implies the natural immortality of brutes, this creates no difficulty, since we know not what latent powers and capacities they may possess. Man, in infancy and childhood, is incapable of religion. It is the general law of nature, that *rational* creatures should, for years, be placed in a condition of being, in which he can-

not exercise his reason; and great numbers leave the world before they can exercise the capacities they possess.

Secondly: The natural immortality of brutes does not imply that they are possessed of any latent capacities of a rational or moral nature. The economy of the universe may require that they should be living creatures without such capacities. Such difficulties are founded in our ignorance how they will be disposed of.

It is evident that our *present* powers and capacities of reason, memory, and affection, do not depend on the body, in the manner perception by our organs of sense does. Why then should we think that the death of the body will destroy them, as well as our powers of sensation? Or, why even *suspend* the powers of reflection?

There are instances of mortal diseases which do not at all affect our present intellectual powers; and this affords a presumption that those diseases will not destroy them.

Drowsiness and sleep suspend the exercise of our living powers, and hence we *might* have imagined it would destroy them, till experience shewed the weakness of this decision. But in many mortal diseases, there is not the shadow of probability, of our reflecting powers being suspended, as the moment before death, many persons are in the highest vigour of life. Apprehension, memory, reason, all appear entire, with the utmost force of affection, sense of character, of shame, and honor; and the highest mental enjoyments and sufferings, even to the last gasp; which prove greater vigour of life than bodily strength does. Why think disease will *destroy* those powers, which, even when *mortal*, it does not impair?

If death does not suspend our reflecting powers,—the next life, with all its additions, may consist rather in going on, than beginning anew. Death, in some respects, may answer to our birth, which is not a suspension of the faculties we had before it, or a *total* change of the state of life in which we existed in the womb; but a continuation of both, with great alterations. In the natural course of things, death may put us into a higher and more enlarged state of life, or sphere of perception and action, as our birth does.—It appears then, from analogy, that death does not destroy the soul, or living agent,—nor its *present* powers of reflection,—nor even *suspend* the exercise of our reflecting powers.

We have a capacity for happiness and misery. In our present state, much of our enjoyments and miseries, *is put in our own power*. Pleasure and pain are the consequences of our actions; these consequences we are enabled to foresee. God does not preserve us exclusively of our own care. We obtain common blessings by exertion. Prudence may secure comfort and promote our worldly interests; and imprudence render us miserable. Many do, what instruction, example, and experience teach them will bring poverty and disgrace, misery and death. It is the general method of divine administration, that we should possess capacities to foresee

with more or less clearness, that certain actions will produce enjoyment—others, sufferings. Our foresight of the consequences of our actions, is a warning given us how we are to act; and we find such consequences uniformly follow. Hence we infer, that we are under the divine government, and that God rewards and punishes us.

To preserve us, we foresee pain from fire and a wound;—this pain is punishment, as really as if a voice from heaven declared it to be so.

Thus the whole course or analogy of nature shows us, that there is nothing incredible in that doctrine of religion that God will reward and punish men according to their works.

There are *natural* punishments; that is, uniformly, pain and pleasure follow certain actions.

Sickness and untimely death, are the consequences of intemperance, though accompanied with the highest mirth. These punishments often exceed the preceding pleasures; and these punishments are often delayed, a long time after the crimes, or actions which occasioned them are forgotten. Hence from *the constitution of nature*, delay of punishment, admits of no kind or degree of presumption, of final impunity. After such delay, these natural punishments or miseries often come, not by degrees, but suddenly, violently, and at once.

If youth, thoughtless and rash, *do not* foresee the consequences of evil actions, they nevertheless follow them. Habits contracted in youth, are often destructive of the health and comfort of age.

The general laws of nature also afford some advantageous opportunities which never return. As youth, unteachable and self-willed, suffers in future life. If the husbandman loses his seed-time, the advantages of that year, are lost for ever. So the effects of folly and extravagance carried to a certain degree, may in some measure be removed, as loss of health and character.

No. CXX.

The Missionary Cause.

(*Written soon after the Loss of the Missionary Ship, Duff.*)

If ever there was one subject of greater magnitude than another, it is that of *human redemption*. It is here we behold means used, which display, most fully, the character of their author, and the grandeur of his design. The redemption of man! lapsed, ruined, miserable and helpless man! how encouraging the theme! how delightfully interesting to his anxious and foreboding breast.—Come then, O man! turn thy attention to this scheme of infinite Deity and

learn what it unfolds to the teachable and awakened mind. Redemption! A word big with meaning, importing, that man is *bought off* from his captivity to Satan, to justice, to the law, to sin and death. From all penal evil is he redeemed;—and every possible good must follow to the soul who receives it. "Redeemed us to God," to his favour, image and glory. The *end* must be worthy of the God of perfect wisdom, and perfect love. It must speak the *god-like* counsel, purpose, grace, covenant and promise of the greatest of beings, towards the vile, the guilty, the *hell-deserving*. It must exhibit the most confounding aspect towards Satan, in his artifice to destroy man by sin, and his cruelty, to promote his despair of mercy.

And who is the author of this august, this gracious work. No mere *man*; for all such need redemption. No, he who alone is God,—for he has not the nature which has sinned, or can suffer for sin. No angel in light has love or worth enough to undertake this work. Jesus, the God-man, can atone by his sufferings and purchase souls by his blood.—His love to undertake, to endure, to die, shall carry him through the task: for, "he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Jesus, who felt interested in the honours of God-head, and the happiness of lost souls; he is the great Redeemer! And who but he could perform the work, or bear the burden of this unspeakable office? The character and works, of IMMANUEL, prove him to be "The wonderful," O more than wonderful, being! How can a finite understanding, however illuminated, enlarged and refined, fully comprehend him, who is in one person, "the man of sorrows," and "the creator of the ends of the earth." Silence all my *reasoning* powers;—silence my pride—my senses and my will,—be lost in *adoring faith*, in this commanding truth of revelation, and "give glory to God in the enjoyment of thy own personal redemption!" Realise with christian pleasure, one pagan converted, putting the word of God into the hand of another, saying, "Take fast hold of this instruction; let it not go; keep it; for it is thy life!" Think you hear him add, Do not covet the mere curiosities of the christians—nor even their money; this book contains their greatest treasure, the revelation of a SAVIOUR for us who dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth—This, this is the treasure for which we ought to long; "for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."

Whilst some friends of the Gospel have been preaching it, with the feeble efficacy of a winter's sun, and many enemies are opposing it with united and repeated efforts; may this society, by a constant and vigorous perseverance which nothing shall obscure or impede, shed upon the minds of Pagans, darkened by mists and clouds of the foulest passions, the most destructive errors and the most barbarous rites, the illuminating and enlivening beams of revealed truth. "So let all" sin and error "perish, O Lord, with every

attempt of thine enemies to pervert the Gospel, or obstruct its progress; "but let" the Missionary Society, that is, the men who "love thy name, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength!"

The work of a missionary is of the first importance, and blended with peril, labour, and honour. It demands the faithful vigilance, the zealous exertion, the undaunted fortitude and patient self-denial of a soldier—"A good soldier of Jesus Christ." They, in an especial manner, must "meet their enemies in the gate." Enemies, whose name is legion, for they are many. Nor is their power less formidable than their number. Their leader is called "a roaring lion, the adversary, the strong man armed, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world." Their sagacity and malignity, and their experience of success, stimulated by pride, envy, and raging despair, united with their number, power, and restless activity, should lead the Christian missionary to expect opposition from them, corresponding with their nature. The empire of Satan is fortified by ignorance and error; unbelief and carnal reasonings; sensual desires and rooted prejudices; impenitence and enmity against God; strengthened by fabulous traditions, absurd and cruel ceremonies, and long established customs.

These are the enemy's STRONG-HOLDS, and not to be battered down with the carnal weapons of human learning and eloquence, nor by vain philosophy, worldly policy, and formal piety; but by "THE TRUTH *as it is in* JESUS," faithfully preached; by believing, ardent, persevering prayer—by the union of meekness and wisdom in conversation, by patient fortitude in suffering, and by purity of character, shining through the whole. These weapons of our warfare, are "mighty through God, to the pulling down strong-holds."

Before these, Satan's fortifications are demolished, with every barrier raised to obstruct the entrance of the Saviour;—his garrisons disperse, his captives yield in voluntary, affectionate, humble and confidential subjection to Jesus, as the conqueror, the deliverer, and the prince! Before him every system of false doctrines, of evil passions, and of mere formal duties, is destroyed, sceptical, deistical, and atheistical thoughts are expelled; and those doctrines which concealed or excused sin, which represented God too indifferent or too kind to inflict just punishment on the sinner, and induce him to entertain haughty notions of his own natural or moral excellence, and confide presumptuously in his own wisdom, strength, righteousness and worthiness, and rendered Christ's salvation needless, are now supplanted by the humbling doctrines of grace. His vain objections are silenced, God in Christ is become amiable, he feels the irresistible demonstrations of saving love, which overpower the native enmity of his heart. His illusions are dissipated, and the understanding and the heart, the soul and the body, surrender to Immanuel, and take law from the conqueror. The system of evil passions,

no longer reigns. His ambitious purpose,—the self-devised plans of happiness,—proud independence and self-sufficient efforts, with every thought which exalted itself against the knowledge, or gospel of Christ, is taken captive; and the soul "is made willing," all-conquering Saviour! "in the day of thy power."

The value of the soul, in the estimation of the God of infinite knowledge, appears in the establishment of the Gospel ministry—in which the various ordinary and extraordinary gifts have been exercised in beautiful variety. A succession of extraordinary messengers from God, is seen in the dispensation of types and of prophecy. Next follow those endowed with miraculous powers, called Apostles. And, after them, pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and the edification of the body of Christ,—pastors and teachers,—men after God's own heart, are promised to the church, and the presence of Christ with them to the end of the world! Every degree of influence which accompanies the messages of these ambassadors from God to men, to warn, illuminate, comfort, purify, and exalt the heart—gives additional force to this demonstration of the worth of human souls. But still more does their importance appear, in their being the subjects of *angelic ministry*. "Are not all the innumerable company of ANGELS," ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation? Is there not "joy in the presence of the ANGELS of God" over ONE sinner that repenteth? And are we not charged—not "to offend," by unkindness or seduction," one of Christ's little ones, from the consideration, that, "in heaven their ANGELS do always behold the face of his father;" enjoy his complacent smiles and divine countenance in their benevolent attention to his little ones?

Add to the ministry of men and angels, the ministry of THE SON OF GOD, on the behalf of souls, and the evidence of their worth becomes stronger.

Did he, who is Lord of all the worlds, assume a nature, endowed with every natural and moral perfection, that he might come into our world "to seek and to save them that are lost?" Did *he* "condescend to become a missionary *from* the bosom of the father to our apostate world, to invite sinners to repentance, and gather them under his wings for safety?—Blush! my soul,—blush ye ministers, parents, relatives, friends, and neighbours, at the recollection of careless indifference towards the *souls of men*. Here, my wealthy hearers, learn to turn the stream of your wealth, into the same channel as a Saviour's ministry. Ministers, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, let the *same mind* be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, and direct your talents, your property and your prayers, to seek and save them that are lost! Can that person have the mind of Christ, who thinks of the awful condition of fallen souls, without sympathy; or professes to feel without labouring to promote their salvation?

Many of us who see the seed-time of missionary efforts, may live to enjoy but few even of its *first-fruits*. "We have gone forth weeping," in our late loss of the ship, and the obstruction of our progress in the south-seas; but we shall doubtless, sooner or later, return with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. If we labour, and other men enter into our labours; if one should sow and another reap, yet, "when all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne," from every land, tongue, kindred, and people, then "those who sowed," and the poor pagans "who reaped, shall rejoice together." It is no small honour to be instrumental in "preparing the *way of the Lord*," for his glorious progress through the Pagan world.

The period is rapidly approaching, when our missionaries, instead of the intimidations of Otaheite, shall experience the most friendly recommendations from the Pagan tribes, presenting their offerings in the spirit of Abimelech to Abraham; they shall add, "Behold! our land is before thee; dwell where it pleaseth thee."

Difficulties in the way of converting the Pagans present themselves; and they are very great ones: indeed, to every principle but faith, they seem insurmountable. But when I think of Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh, from Egypt, from Babylon; when I consider the miraculous interpositions of God on their behalf, when their condition was almost hopeless; when I contemplate the accomplishment of the first promise in the incarnation of a Saviour, the *millions of Pagans* already converted, justified and glorified; when I dwell on the creation of a world, the agonies of a Saviour, the promises of that God, whose love, wisdom, and power are equal to the accomplishment of all his purposes, I tread firm, my gracious prospects extend, I see no difficulties, I dread no obstruction, I feel no doubts: No! I see mountains levelled, vallies exalted, crooked things made straight, rough places plain, and the way of the Lord prepared: I hear the voices of the messengers of grace, in the uttermost parts of the earth, crying, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world!" I behold lost sinners, in the Pagan world, listening to the glad tidings of redemption, weeping, believing, rejoicing, and admiring! I behold prodigals returning, lost sheep found, captives liberated; and, in all, wretchedness exchanged for happiness. For "Blessed are the people, in every place, who know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance!"

Tell me why this world is preserved—why day and night are not come to an end? Surely! that the redeemed may be born, quickened and saved. I can sooner believe the covenant of the day and night will be broken—that heaven and earth will pass away—than one prophecy or promise of the conversion of the heathen should fail. God is not a man, that he should lie, in making promises, nor the son of man, that he should repent of making them. Those Scriptures cannot be broken. The mercy, power, and faithfulness

of God, forbid the thought. Courage! then, fellow Christians, courage! "the Lord's arm is not shortened,—his ear is not heavy," —his love is not changeable,—his spirit is still striving by the Missionary Society. Be importunate in your prayers, enlarged in your expectations, zealous and persevering in your actions, for the cause is not of man, but of GOD?"

No. CXXI.—To READERS.

As you have been taught to read, I hope you read your Bible, for too many love to read almost any book rather than the Bible. Read the word of God,—read it *often*,—read it *as* the word of God, —read it as a *duty* you owe to God,—read it *alone*,—and read it *seriously*.

Read the word of God with a desire to UNDERSTAND it.

Some read and "hear the word of the kingdom, and understand it not." They do not *meditate* or think on it, and inquire into the *meaning* of it. Converse with persons who can *explain* it to you; ask them questions with a teachable mind. Do not be ashamed to own your ignorance.

Pray to God to enlighten your understanding by his grace, as David did, in these words, "Open THOU mine eyes, that I may understand the wondrous things of thy word;" and as he prayed, on another occasion, in the following words: "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me."

Hear the gospel *preached*. God commanded his apostles to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Then it is the duty of every creature to *hear* it, if he can. Hear those ministers in the church or meeting, which preach most of CHRIST and of salvation by grace. Hear those ministers that preach plainly and earnestly the love of Christ to sinners, and teach you what you must do to be saved.

Faithful ministers preach the gospel as men that believe it, enjoy it, and earnestly desire to make their hearers *feel* the truth. Such ministers in the church and meeting are often called Methodists, and by other names of reproach. Do not wonder at this; for Christ and his apostles were represented as madmen, because they preached as those who *felt* the truth. They warned sinners to flee from the wrath to come. They said to their hearers, "Except yee repent yee shall perish. He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark, xvi. 16.

Jesus Christ said, "yee must be born again: for except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Do not hear ministers that preach in language which you do not understand; or such as would lull you to sleep in your sins. But hear those that shew you your *danger*, as lost sinners, and direct you

to Jesus Christ, as your *only refuge*. Such ministers are not satisfied that you go to church or meeting, and *say* your prayers; but they earnestly desire that you may so "hear that your souls may live."

Exercise your MEMORY.

Endeavour to fix in your memory the invitations and promises of Christ. John vi. 37, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;" Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,"—rest for the soul; Rev. xx. 17, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life," that is, the blessings of salvation, "*freely*."

Christ invites you to come to him, as sinners to a Saviour. He is able and willing to save all that come to him. He says, "Come, for all things are ready. Behold! now is the accepted time: behold! now is the day of salvation."

Consider the necessity of BELIEVING the word of God.

Without faith, you cannot please God. Without faith, you cannot receive profit from reading or hearing the word of God. He that believeth is not condemned. He that believeth shall be saved. Without faith you cannot *repent;* that is, hate your sins, confess and forsake them.

Without faith you cannot PRAY; for how shall you call on him in whom you have not believed? If you believe not in Christ, he says you shall die in your sins.

Be careful against *mistakes*.

Some persons go to hear the word preached and do not read it, nor hear others read it to them. This is an error in practice.

Others *read* the Scriptures, and think that it will save them.—This also is an error; for thousands read the Scriptures, who live in lying and dishonesty; they swear, or are drunkards; they break the Sabbath, or live in whoredom.

Such persons are worse than those who cannot read; for they know the Lord's will and do it not. They read without faith, without repentance, without obedience: and remember, though you read the Scriptures, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Many read the Scriptures, and think that if they reform their conduct, it is enough. This is a great mistake.

They trust for salvation in *morality*, or good behaviour to their fellow-creatures.

If they are sober, industrious, honest, and charitable, they shall be saved.

This is the religion of a Pharisee, who trusts in his own righteousness, instead of trusting in the sufferings, and promises, and grace of Jesus Christ. Read Mat. xxiii, and you will learn, that the publicans and harlots, that believe in Christ and repent of their sins, enter the kingdom of Heaven before the Pharisees. Read Luke xviii, and instead of proudly thinking you shall be saved

because you are better than others, cry with the penitent publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

No. CXXII.—Union to Christ.

Union, vital, spiritual union with Christ the son of God, the mediator between God and man, reflects the highest glory on the moral law and government of God; as it secures the perfect holiness of the soul that is "joined to the Lord, and is One Spirit" with him. In this admirable plan, "God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

This method of doctrinal, experimental, and practical goodness, had its origin in infinite love, was arranged by infinite wisdom, and is rendered effectual by infinite power. These perfections shine in creation and Providence, but *here* they shine singly and collectively in the *highest* degree.

> "*Here*, his whole name appears complete;
> Nor wit can guess, nor reason prove,
> Which of the letters best is writ,
> The power, the wisdom, or the love."

Other unions may prove *injurious*, although promising in appearance, whether civil or political, relative or federal, what evils are entailed on the posterity of Adam, by their natural and covenant union with him. How complicated the miseries resulting from the matrimonial union, in husbands and wives, parents and children! What personal and domestic woes are felt from union of worldly interests in partnership! and even the union of friendship may prove the occasion of some of the greatest afflictions of human life.

Where such unions advance our interest and comfort,—unexpected changes in life or death, dissolve them; not excepting the closest union of body and soul.

But no external condition, no personal sufferings in body or mind;—not death itself, can dissolve the union formed by the Spirit of Grace, between Christ and real believers; for "Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord."

The importance of union with the Lord Jesus, appears from the dignity of his person,—the perfection of his character,—the influence of his offices, his works, and his salvation. He is the Creator and Governor of the world;—the Saviour and Judge of the world! His glory, his love, and his merit, are celebrated on earth and in heaven; and fallen angels feel his power, and dread his sentence. To be united to him by the indissoluble bond of "the Spirit of Grace," is the immediate source of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption! A soul united to him, is "alive unto God,"—

is pardoned, justified, sanctified, accepted, and assured of all the grace, strength, comfort, essential to its perseverance and final happiness.

Let not the unbelieving, the self-righteous, the unholy and hypocritical professor, presume on his birth of christian parents, his baptism in the name of Christ, his attendance in the house of God on divine ordinances, his gifts of talking and preaching, his party zeal, and his ostentatious liberality. Pride and envy, resentment of reproof, lust of power, and zeal for a party, may induce unsanctified professors to blaze in public meetings, and contribute to the support of charitable institutions. Detect their hypocrisy, reprove their malignity, expose their avarice, their dishonesty, their falsehood, their slander, their love of power, or their craftiness in deceiving the simple,—and they will crucify Christ in his members and ministers, supporting the cause of Christ in one place, to ruin it in another.

But the Christian who is one in judgment, affection, interest, and aim, with the Redeemer, can he refuse to unite his exertions with the benevolent societies, instituted to advance the cause of revealed truth, the cause of the Saviour, the cause of man, the cause of God? Impossible! He will, he must lend his aid to the Missionary Societies, the Bible and Tract Societies; he must pray for and assist the Village and Sunday School Societies;—He must be a friend to those Academies which have for their object, the qualification of young men for the work of the Christian Ministry.

No. CXXIII.—Experience.

It is remarked of Fisher Ames, of America, that what gave peculiar force to his eloquence was, the strong self-conviction which he always manifested.

How important,—how *very* important this self-conviction to a minister of the gospel! "To delineate genius, one must feel its power." To delineate the influence of the gospel on the heart, and speak of it in an impressive manner, it must be *felt* in its *certainty* and power.

No. CXXIV.—Devotion.

Of the importance of unfeigned devotion to God,—the sanctification of the heart, in union with simplicity of dependence on Jesus for pardon, and eternal life,—let conscience speak. Why those fears and hopes, sorrows and joys, in retirement? Contemplating death, a judgment day, and an eternal state. Will a man's opinions, his gifts, or the opinions of others satisfy his conscience? No: his anxious uncertainty, his sighs and complaints in secret, are occasioned by his defects in character. The defects of his duties, his heart and life, are the principal things that affect his

peace and hope. Let his *conscience* testify that his *heart* is right with God, and this is his rejoicing: not as the *foundation* of his faith and hope; but the *evidence* that they are unfeigned, and of his *union* with Jesus.

No. CXXV.—The World.

The world appears nothing but a large and gloomy prison, in which lie millions of distracted criminals and rebels against their creator, under sentence of condemnation, whom death, one by one, is privately executing. Who knows the power of God's anger against them? and the less they know of it, the more reason they have to dread it. To see sinners eating and drinking, buying and selling, following their diversions and employments, with the curse of God covering them as a garment, and mingling with all their business and all their comforts; and to reflect, that they are all the while, on the brink of eternity, and for aught they know, with not a step, not a hand's-breadth, not a hair's-breadth, between them and death, between them and damnation! They know not, but before they sleep, justice may seize and imprison them for ever, and yet they are thoughtless of their danger.

No. CXXVI.—Peace and Holiness.

Christians are men of *peace*, and are charged to follow peace with all men, and holiness. If peace and *holiness* are to be united, we must not seek peace *in* sin—nor peace *with sin*. It is not *indifference* to the authority of Christ and the voice of *conscience*—not the peace of those who *sleep*, much less a peace resembling the quiet of a church-yard, where all are *dead;* but a peace which is consistent with a faithful discharge of duty to our Lord and Saviour.

If the men of the world are offended with us for a faithful discharge of duty, let them be offended; our rule of duty is plain,—"we ought to obey God, rather than man." When Paul and Silas preached the gospel at Thyatira, they were brought before the magistrates with the following charge:—"These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city," Acts, xvi., 20. Some of our *modern* christians would have advised the apostles not to *disturb* the city, and draw on themselves a host of persecutors; but so far was this faithful soldier from listening to the *suggestions* of such cold, hypocritical prudence, that he consulted not with flesh and blood." The apostle respected magistracy as an ordinance of God; but he would not surrender his *conscience* to the magistrate. Alas! how many christians in our day, unite with the men of the world, in

spirit and *interest*; commit the keeping of their consciences to some man of power in a town, and say yea or nay, for twenty or thirty years together, as the man of influence commands them.—They plead *duty*, but should say *interest* governs them. The publican is governed by the brewer, the brewer by the corporation, or the mayor, or some *little great* man. "The fear of offending man bringeth a snare," and leads them to offend God. Such persons seeking the good word of carnal men, "the honour that cometh from man," will cut and trim, bend and be obstinate, speak or be silent, as *interest* leads them. If a minister of the gospel should depend on such persons to support him in any zealous exertions against sin, these "double minds, unstable in all their ways," will disappoint him.

This time-server, will betray his minister and his master, sell his conscience and the church, for a convenient price; and plead, that he is doing his duty, that he wishes *to live in peace*, and avoid giving offence, when his soul is governed by these two motives, his worldly gains, and his ease. Let him shun the cross, by keeping his good name amongst bad men, and preserve his *profits*—this is the one thing needful—this is prudence, peaceableness, respectability,—"all, in all."

No. CXXVII.—Cards.

The *Spectator* gives us the following anecdote of Mr. *Locke*. Being invited to dine with the then Lords *Halifax*, *Anglesey*, and *Shaftsbury*, immediately after dinner, instead of *conversation*, the *Cards* were called for, when the bad or good success produced the usual passions of gaming. Mr. Locke, retiring to a window, and writing, my Lord *Anglesey* desired to know what he was writing. "Why, my lords," answered he, "I could not sleep last night for the pleasure and improvement I expected from the conversation of the greatest men of the age." This so sensibly stung them, that they gladly compounded to throw their cards into the fire, if he would his paper, and so a conversation ensued, fit for such persons. Spect. No. 533.

From this anecdote it appears, that good sense, a liberal education, and a taste for mental improvement, disqualify a person for the enjoyment of the *childish tattle* of the card-table. Pernicious game! to enjoy which, persons must sacrifice the duty and pleasure of improving their minds by useful conversation, must abuse their precious time, and bury their talents; to engage in peevish debates, petty wrangles, low chatter, and the most silly triumphs. The conversation of such persons at *best*, is *insignificant*; *often* it is composed of envious falsehoods, and profane sarcasms; or of unchaste wit, and false intimations against absent characters; and

sometimes, to make sport and enliven the game, the person who is the greatest liar, and the greatest fool, is the fiddle of the company.

No. CXXVIII.—Imputed Righteousness.

To *impute* to me the righteousness of Christ, is to reckon or account it to me; or to *place it to my account*. This is a divine and gracious act. Its consequences to the believer are pardon of all his sins,—acceptance with God as righteous, and eternal life. Considering the dignity of the Saviour, the perfection of his character, the nature, extent, and design of his obedience and sufferings, we may well acknowledge every blessing of salvation conferred on us, to be the *reward* of his righteousness. The spirit of Christ visits the sinner, *quickens* his dead soul, *draws* him to Christ for righteousness, enables him to *confide* in him for justification. The believer's sins were imputed to Christ, placed to his account and punished on him. The righteousness of Christ, that is, the whole of his meritorious obedience and sufferings, are imputed, placed to the account of the believer, and he is justified from all sin, freed from condemnation, and entitled to eternal life, as a reward to Christ and as a free gift to the believer. This is substantial blessedness. This is salvation. God imputes *no sin* to the believer; lays *no sin* to his charge; saves him from condemnation, fulfils to him the promises of sanctification, strength and consolation. He pours upon him the spirit of grace and supplication; shields him from the fatal influence of temptation, supports him under his afflictions, engraves on his heart the obligations of grace, gives him a good hope, and, in proportion to his faith, fills him with grateful joy and humble admiration. His language is,—"What shall I say to THESE things? If God be for me, who can be against me?"—What shall I render to the Lord? "It is Christ that died: it is God that justifieth." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile," or deceit in this transaction. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works," for his justification. While he creates him in Christ Jesus unto good works, which *justify his faith*, and prove it genuine and unfeigned. "Found in Christ," as the *debtor* in his *surety;* and covered with the robe of righteousness as his security, his honour and his joy. And, "found in Christ," as the branch in the fruitful vine, partaking of its life, and bearing fruit;—the spirit of grace from Christ to him, forms *the bond of union*; and by it, Christ is made to him the experimental and immediate source of righteousness and sanctification.

There are three ways by which souls are *deceived* on the doctrine of imputed righteousness. *First*,—the adversary of men persuades them that God has imputed this righteousness when he has not; and inspires them with a delusive peace, supported by a confidence

in the clearness of their own views, compared with the self-righteous notions of others; by strong emotions of joy, from a conceit of the safety of their state and the partial discharge of a few popular duties.

The *second* delusion of being justified, arises from the good opinion of the friends and favourite party of the deluded soul. *They* flattered his highly *evangelical notions*, while a smooth, soothing minister applauds his contempt of his own righteousness, and leaves his sins, undisturbed in their reign over him.

The *third* delusion, consists in *imputing the* righteousness of Christ *to himself*. With a proud conceit of his own knowledge, a lively imagination of the love of God towards him, produced by self-complacency and ignorance of the awful glories of the Mediator's righteousness, he presumptuously concludes he is justified.

These professors are easily distinguished from the real believer in Christ.

With an awful ignorance of the law of God, the evil of sin, and the ruin it involves, they utter the most humble language, and indulge the vilest passions. With the blood and righteousness of Christ on their tongues, they cherish pride, covetousness, malignity or lust, in their hearts. Elated with their own opinions, liberality, or zeal for *public* duties, they "bridle not their tongues" from deceit and lying, backbiting and slander. They exalt themselves, by misrepresentations of others; and bitterly censure the imaginary sins of their neighbours to conceal their own.

If you offend them by faithful and kind *reproof*, they will sacrifice the peace of the church, and the usefulness of a minister, to their self-will and persevering resentment. Living in the element of misrepresentation, with a conscience seared by the indulgence of criminal tempers, and an hypocritical familiarity with the blood and righteousness of Christ, "as a cloke to their sins," they, "hate him that REPROVETH in the gate" of Zion. Touch their unsanctified temper, their dishonesty, their purse-proud conversation, their frauds in trade, their love of power, their arbitrary and oppressive conduct, and they are your implacable enemies. They readily pass over sins in their own favourites; they forgive sin against God, his church, and his ministers; but if you offend *them*, expect "*judgment without mercy*."

Taking their own opinion, as the standard of right and wrong, they must not be tried or judged by the word of God. If they quote scripture, it is to censure others, and justify themselves. They acknowledge the *fall* of man as a *doctrine;* but do not humbly and penitently feel *themselves* "GUILTY BEFORE GOD." They talk largely of their EXPERIENCE, which consists of the exercise of the natural passions in support of self-preference, instead of holy affections, "the fruits of the Spirit."

Their "faith, which is dead, being alone," is not associated with

humility, with godly sorrow, and with holy dispositions. They are, therefore, not justified by *faith*, but by *self-love*, *self-deceit*, *presumption*, flattery, and self-applause.

The Scripture doth not say, "blessed is the man, to whom his *flatterers* impute no iniquity;" "blessed is the man to whom his *own party* imputeth righteousness;" nor, "blessed is the man who imputeth the righteousness of Christ to himself;" but "blessed is the man to whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity:"—"To whom THE LORD imputeth righteousness!" This man having, in deep humiliation, unfeigned repentance, felt himself guilty, "GUILTY BEFORE GOD," and "come to Christ for righteousness and strength," his justification is real, complete, and permanent. To such, Jehovah has imputed the righteousness, and imparted the spirit, of Christ; and says, "Thee have I seen RIGHTEOUS BEFORE ME!" Thus, he who "compasses himself about with sparks of his own kindling," deceives his own soul, grieves the righteous, hardens the wicked, and makes them "blaspheme the name of Christ," and slander his truth and his people. This shall they have at the hands of the Lord, and soon too, without "repentance unto life:" they shall lie down in sorrow. But "mark the righteous man; behold the upright: for the END of that man is peace!" Yes! "Light is sown for the *righteous*, and joy for the UPRIGHT IN HEART."

The hypocritical professor may dream of his blessed *state;* but the real believer *is* blessed in his state, his principles, his disposition, his duties and trials, in his end and in his prospects! "O the blessedness of the man, to whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile," to *cover*, *excuse*, and *indulge* it!

No. CXXIX.—ANTINOMIANISM.

IT is awful to hear men in *words*, like the foolish virgins, cry, "Lord! Lord!" and in temper and conduct say, "our souls and bodies—our tongues and property are our own,—"who is Lord over us?"—I will—and I will not,—is *law* to them.

The same persons will lament the corruptions of their hearts and their sinful nature,—to be flattered for their self-knowledge and humility. For if you reprove or contradict them, or oppose their ambition—their resentment will soon prove their *reigning pride*, and *self-deception*. And whilst one of them "groans, being in bondage" to reigning pride and self-will, without knowing it; another talks of the wickedness of his heart, as if he were speaking of the freckles on his face."

They use the humble language of the publican, "*God be merciful to me a sinner;*"—or the language of the Church of England. "We have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep; there is no health in us; but thou, O God, have mercy on us, miserable

sinners." Thousands in the Established Church; and many among the dissenters at their prayer-meetings, repeat these very words for twenty years, who have never received the mercy they seem to implore; because, in fact, they are very *humble* in WORDS and *very proud* in SPIRIT. They cry, "*thy will be done;*" and resolve to follow their own. They cry for mercy to pardon sin, save them from hell and conduct them to heaven; but do not desire mercy to *subdue* their sins. Their natural passions may be roused by a sermon, they may weep under it, admire the discourse, extol the preacher,—hear, pray, converse and sing, as with "the tongues of (*good*) men and of angels," until their will is crossed!—their *favourite sin* touched!—then, they would treat their ministers as Herod did the faithful John Baptist. "He first heard him *gladly*, and *did many* things;" but afterwards *beheaded him!* Or as the Galatians treated the Apostle Paul;—they "would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him," but when he attacked their favourite *errors* and *sins*, they "counted him an enemy, because he told them *the truth.*"

These professors, as the late Mr. Andrew Fuller remarked, exclaim against the devil and self-righteousness; as if *these* were the *only* enemies of the christian: but the evil into which they fall, is *antinomianism:* that is, any kind of doctrinal or practical opposition to the law of God.

The word antinomianism is derived from two Greek words, *anti*, against, and *nomos*, the law; *against the law.* And we mean by an antinomian one, who, whilst he professes to believe in Christ as a SAVIOUR,—neglects obedience to Christ as his LORD. I do not mean by this that the moral law, or the ten commands, is the *only* rule of life; this is to be sought in the whole revealed will of God.

There are persons whose religion consists in railing against the self-righteous, and such as *boast* of their goodness. They are ready to say, "thank God! I am not as these Pharisees."

But mark them—they are as perpetually boasting of *their* FAITH, as Pharisees of their *works.* They boast of their clear and evangelical sentiments; and are proud of the *humble* WORDS they use, in reproaching themselves as *vile sinners,—lost sinners,—the chief of sinners,—the greatest sinners out of hell.* If they subscribe liberally towards the support of the gospel, you are sure to hear of it, from themselves or their flatterers. They wish their works to SHINE before men to exalt *themselves.* Their liberality is the price of "a NAME to live," as pious, zealous, christians, while yet they are *dead.* As these persons pride themselves in the doctrine of *election*, and imputed righteousness, they are sure to *elect* themselves and others that appear to think favourably of them. They give each other the appellations of *believers, children of God, saints*, and *the converted.* They impute Christ's righteousness to themselves, and to each other, and deceive themselves, by presuming on *the safety of their* STATE, as they term it. A smooth sermon which does not touch a beloved sin, which reigns in their *dis-*

positions and *conversation*, is admired, as *an excellent sermon! a delightful discourse!*

Severe as they may be towards others, by the misrepresentations of prejudice and resentment for reproof, they cover *their own sins* by the soft names of *infirmities* and *imperfections*. Their motto is *peace, peace*, without *holiness*. To their own partisans they use the lulling repetitions,—'These infirmities do not affect the STATE of believers,'—'They trust their STATE is good,'—They *presume* "the good work" is "begun," and, without scriptural evidence of its progress or existence, they trust that Christ will "finish it." If their creed be sound, these are lying and slanderous believers—covetous and dishonest believers—unchaste believers, believing extortioners, and believing hypocrites.

Luther's advice to Melancton, was, "To preach, that those who do not fall out with their *sins*, may fall out with thee." If pride, lust, covetousness, prejudice or resentment, reign within,—the hearer will fall out with the *preacher*. If *grace* reign within, the hearer will fall out with *himself*. An upright hearer would rather be *wounded* than *flattered*:—rather be distressed for his lukewarmness, than lulled by "smooth things and deceits." The preacher who cries "peace, peace," to his hearers, who indulge their sins, and call them *infirmities*, by telling them these sins will *humble* them, ascribes to *sin*, effects, which nothing but *grace* can produce; and might as well say that "frost will thaw the ground, and sickness promote health."

Their attention to the *means of grace*, is a cloke for reigning "guile" in the heart and tongue. The means of grace to them, are, to borrow the words of an eminent character, "the means of *idleness* and *sleeping*; the means of *gossiping* and *slander*; the means of *worldly gain*, and a *religious reputation*; the means of obtaining *power* over the simple; the means of *amusing* themselves by music; and the means of making *converts* to their own *party*." They are the means of *idolizing* a minister so long as he shall *please* them; and of *crucifying* him, when he *offends* them. The means of grace to such persons are "like pipes to a garden, which convey no water." And when men attend a place of worship with regularity and zeal, living in sin, the Lord says, "I hate, I despise, your solemn assemblies, your offerings, the noise of your songs, and the melody of your music." The music of such may be melodious, their singing may charm the ear, but the Holy God calls it—"a NOISE!"

There is no error more common among hypocritical professors, than that of considering their *state* good, under the most corrupt *frames* of mind. They believed not in Christ, but in *themselves*: not in his atonement and grace, but *in the safety of their state*.—This they believed without evidence; yea, against evidence to the contrary! *They* are the *elect*; for they have *appointed themselves* to salvation, without holiness. They have justified themselves, by

imputing to themselves the merits of Christ; and then dream that God has justified them. They speak of their *adoption* into God's family; speak very boldly to God, and very freely of him. They have no fears or doubts of their own salvation; for, in their own conceit they are "in covenant with God." They are "in the covenant of grace." This they never doubt, which is called *strong faith*. God has entered into a covenant with Christ to save *them;* they are in *the secret*, which fills them with joy. The FACT, however, is otherwise. They are in covenant with Satan! with the world! with sin!

No. CXXX.—CHRIST THE BELIEVER'S LIFE.

JESUS CHRIST, in his divine person and offices, is the life and soul of all the *counsels* and *purposes* of God, relating to the salvation of men. They *begin* and *centre* in him. It was a purpose of grace, *in Christ Jesus*, before the world began.

He is the life and spirit of the *covenant of grace*. He is the *head* of all who are engaged for; his *undertaking* for his elect, enters into its *very being*. All its *blessings* are in him. His blood, is the blood of the covenant.

He is the life of all the *promises*. They were first made to *him* for us; and are *all in him*. No promise to a *fallen* creature, but through a *Mediator*. They are fulfilled through his obedience, and atonement. He is the *substance* of them all. They all mean, no more nor less than CHRIST, in his person, work and grace.

He is the life of all the *prophecies* relating to the church, in its salvation. "To him give all the prophets witness." The testimony of Jesus is the *spirit* and soul of prophecy. They have no life, no force and meaning, if Christ is left out. They foretel, describe, extol, and recommend him.

He is the life of all the *types*. They all mean *Christ*, in his *saving offices*, and *divine person*. The perfection of his character, the efficiency of his blood, the riches of his love, and the effects of his grace, in accomplishing the *noblest* salvation, are intended in the ceremonial law, which was "a shadow of good things to come."—The blood of the innumerable sacrifices, the divers washings. The office of the High Priesthood, and its various circumstances, all in all cry "behold the *Lamb of God!* who taketh away the sins of the world."

He is the life of all the *doctrines* of the Gospel. Every description of the justice and holiness, the majesty and power, the truth and faithfulness of God, is filled with *energy*, when viewed in the obedience and sufferings, the death and resurrection of Jesus.—Every declaration of the wisdom and love, the grace and mercy of the Father, derives all its life and glory, from the *medium* through which that grace and wisdom shine. 'It is the glory of God, in

his eternal grace, and richest mercy, shining in the person and offices of Jesus Christ. The doctrines delineate the person, the character, and transactions of Jesus, and the *gracious designs* of the Father through him.

He is the life of every *precept*. It is enforced by his authority, work, and love. His example is the *pattern* of all our obedience, his spirit is the *spring*, and his glory the *end* of it.

He is the life of all our *graces*. They come from and lead to him. He is their author, feeder and finisher. They are invigorated by his love, sufferings, grace and power. He enlightens, separates, renews, quickens and comforts the believer.

He is the life of our *happiness* and *glory*. The soul of our present comfort, and future glory. The knowledge and enjoyment of Him, is inseparable from the father's love. Angels and saints feel his influence, and he is the life of their joys.

> "JESUS, the Lord, their harps employs,
> JESUS, my love, they sing;
> JESUS, the *life* of both our joys,
> Sounds sweet from every string."

Jesus, in his *divine perfections* and *mediatorial acts*, is the great theme of the Heavenly inhabitants. He is the life of all their *joys* and their *songs*. Thus is Jesus Christ, SUBSTANTIALLY, the life. Every truth, centres in him. He is the *soul* of its meaning. The doctrines, prophecies, types, promises, and precepts, mean *nothing*, separated from Christ; all their life and meaning, dignity and efficacy, are derived from their *relation to him*. He exhausts their meaning, they are all swallowed up in him. To rest, then, in the *letter* of the word, even the letter of the *gospel*, is to stop short of *life*.

Secondly. Christ is the life, MERITORIOUSLY.—Our pardon is given through his blood which cleanseth from all sin, and his obedience justifies the ungodly, who believe in him. Believing in his perfect atonement and righteousness, is "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood," without which we have "no life in us," John vi, 55. We live through *him*," 1 John v. 11. Mere moral obedience, without any believing regard to *Christ*, in his *authority* as the *reason*,—his love as our *motive*,—his spirit as our *strength*,—his precept as our *rule*,—his example as our *pattern*,—and his glory as our *end*, is not *spiritual* and *acceptable* obedience. But neither our *legal* or *evangelical* obedience, is our *life*:—no, "*I* am the life," saith Christ. There is no life in our sufferings or services, meritoriously; but Christ is the life, *exclusively*. He admits nothing to be joined with his atonement or righteousness, in *part* to deserve life. The believer is "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 11. Through him we are *legally alive*, and safe from condemnation. To approach God by our obedience to the law, as our righteousness,

is *death*, Rom. vii. 10. But Christ is the "*living* way," a way in which we approach God and *live*,—are pardoned and accepted as *righteous*.

Thirdly. Christ is the life EFFICACIOUSLY or efficiently. He communicates a *principle* of spiritual life. He is "the resurrection and the life," of dead *bodies*, and he will raise them at the last day:—of dead *souls*, and he *quickeneth* whom he will, Acts iii. 15. He is the *prince* of life. He *distributes* it as a *royal* gift, in a *free*, *gracious*, and *royal* manner. He is "the *Lord* of life," and *rules*, *cherishes*, and *manages* the life he gives, by his spirit. The spirit of life, in, or from Christ Jesus, frees the soul from spiritual death, Rom. viii. 2.

He is the *immediate* source of it. It is hid with Christ, Col. iii. 3. He is "the last Adam, made a quickening spirit."

Fourthly. Christ is the SUPPORT of life. Christ reveals his person, character, offices, grace, and work, as "the *bread* of life," John vi. 48. Without perpetual discoveries of these things, spiritual life *languishes*;—as the *body* would do, if the staff of life were with-holden from it.—In this sense Christ is "our life," Col. iii. 4.—Our animal life is maintained by *water*, as well as bread, and Jesus cherishes the principles of spiritual life, by his spirit, called the "water of life," Rev. xxi. 6. As mediator, with our nature, the father has *given* him to have life in himself for this purpose, John v. 26. When our faith is directed by the Spirit, to the personal glories, and the mediatorial excellences of Christ, our graces are invigorated, and we live, yet not we, but *Christ*, (as thus revealed and viewed) lives in us, Gal. ii. 20.—He, in his person, love, work, and grace, "lives and *dwells* in the heart, by faith." When faith thus fixes the soul in its *contemplations* of Christ, it *feeds* itself, and he dwells in the *thoughts*—he dwells in the *affections*,—this is being *spiritually* minded, which is attended with *life* and *peace*, Rom. viii. 6. Christ puts forth a real, *spiritual power* also, and blesses the soul with a vigour, an energy, a might, essentially necessary to *preservation* and *growth* of this divine life.

Fifthly. Christ is the life *eminently*; the *most noble* life is derived from him. Animal life is *nothing*, compared with it. Through him a believing sinner finds *favour* with God, Prov. viii. 35. "In his favour is life." Animal and rational life, in their best estate, with their highest interests, unconnected with *Christ*, are poor things. The loving-kindness of God the Father in him, is better than life, Ps. lxiii. 3. A life *originating* in covenant love, which was deposited with Christ, (2 Tim. i. 1.) from whom it is *immediately* derived, by the *agency* of the *Holy Spirit*;—it is, in its properties, *divine*, *spiritual*, pure, and blissful;—its *tendency*, *acts*, and *aims*, are *towards* God, and *for* him;—in its *duration*,—*endless*.

If Christ is the life, in the above senses, in what a woful state are many professors, who are not *united* to him, by faith! For "the

branch cannot bear fruit of *itself.*" All the gifts and privileges of an *outward* kind, may be possessed by an *unbeliever*, such as were *Balaam* and *Judas*;—but neither *law* nor *gospel*;—neither sacred institutions nor church privileges;—neither public duties nor private ones;—neither gifts, nor even *graces*;—are "*the life*" of the soul: No, "*I* am the life," saith Jesus. Our *gracious dispositions*, with all the *good works* flowing from them must be *renounced*, in point of *merit*, as the great act of *self-denial*, which springs from faith in the *person*, *love*, and *offices* of Jesus Christ.—We must "*believe* unto justification of life." The righteousness of Christ must be believed in, and received, as the righteousness of the *God-man*—*peculiarly glorious*—*infinitely perfect*—and *entirely free* to the most ungodly, that believes in Jesus.—Such a soul "hath life," for he has Christ, and his righteousness. And this is the record, that God hath given unto us Eternal Life, and this life is in the *Son*: therefore, he that hath the *Son*, hath *life*, for *he* is the life. But he who hath not the *Son*, though he may have a *sound creed*, *long experience* of the power of truth, restraining him from many sins,—exciting various resolutions, leading to all outward duties, in the most serious, impartial, and constant manner;—yet, he "*hath not* LIFE!"

Hence we may learn the reason why many find *ministers*, *means*, and *truth*, so *unprofitable* to them;—they forget, do not discern, or neglect, their *relation to Christ*. The best societies, with the best of ministers, and the best of books, are good, very good, in *their place*,—but they are not "the life," because they are not *Christ*. That soul finds Jesus his constant life, who considers the relation every divine truth, and every appointed means, bears to *him* who is "*all in all.*"

Jesus Christ is the life of Divine *Dispensations*. "By him all things *subsist*." He "*upholds* all things by the word of his power." He, who as God, is life ESSENTIALLY—life underived, independent, immutable. Happy view to the believer! to see all the circumstances of his life, his condition, business, connexions, miseries, and trials, regulated by his infinite skill, and controlled by infinite power. To behold Christ ordering every thing relative to his *departure* out of the world; as the *place*, the *time*, the *manner*, in a way which best promotes his best concerns;—this affords pleasure, both in the *prospect* and the *review*. "*All* power in *heaven* and *earth*, is given unto him, who is the *head* of *all* principality and power." Pleasing sight! all the dispensations of Providence, relating to life and death, in the hands of one, in *my nature*, who is "equal with God." In the hands of my SAVIOUR, whose power, grace, and faithfulness, are engaged to make all things work together for the best, for me! Surely! Jesus, in this view, is the life and soul of Providence.

"Christ is my life, my joy, my hope;
Nor can I *sink* with *such* a prop."

Am I in *sickness*? *Jesus* brings me low, to exalt me the more. Do I sustain any loss in my property, character, friends? It is the hand of *Christ!* Is it possible to complain of what *he* doth? If my wife or child should be snatched away, the enlivening thought is—"It is the *Lord!*" *Chance* has no part in any of my concerns. No!—Whilst he who has "power over all flesh" lives and reigns, I do not fear but my confession will be, "*He* hath done all things *well!*"

No. CXXXI.—Duty.

Duty, in its constant uses implies submission to the *will* of a superior. We never speak of the duty of God, who has no superior. His preceptive will is the *rule* of duty to fallen man; and that *will* directed by goodness and wisdom, and supported by power, is the proper source of personal obligation.

The *motive* to obey the will of God, means the whole of that which moves, excites or invites the mind to choose or determine; whether one thing singly, or many things conjointly. Thus *a perception* of the will of God, as a law, worthy of himself, good for me, altogether and always so, moves to duty. A man may be rich in arguments, and poor in motives; weights in the box do not move the scale. Corrupt appetites often conquer a clear understanding.

With the preceptive will of God as our *rule* of duty, the *goodness* of this rule as our *motive*, in what *manner* should we endeavour to regard it? As *dependent* on *divine concurrence*. We should study to know it by lawful means, and endeavour to follow it. Without revelation we are led to despair, "like one who ventures too near the North Pole, where light becomes tremendous, opening horrid prospects,—regions where the wanderer can never settle; which leaves him without a ray of hope, that by still advancing he shall ever reach to milder skies."

The law, to fallen man, is subservient to the Gospel: "it was *added*, because of transgressions until Christ should come; and was ordained by angels in the hand of a MEDIATOR." It may be inquired,—is no man under the law since the fall? We answer, *no*; not under the law, abstracted from the Gospel;—not by any external dispensation of divine government; although many persons may be so, in the disposition of their own heart.

The plain duty of a fallen creature in possession of revelation is to read the word of God, with a desire to *understand* it and *submit* his understanding, his conscience, his heart and life to it. "Search the Scriptures," is a divine injunction. But even this is presumption without *prayer*. We must, as dependent creatures, "lift up our voice for understanding." Then we shall open the Bible and cry, "Lord, open thou my eyes, that I may understand the wondrous things in thy word!" Jesus "opened the understanding

of his disciples; and opened to them the Scriptures." In the sacred pages we learn our *wants*, and our insufficiency to supply them; and are taught the sufficiency of the grace of God and the freeness of its blessings, "without money and without price." We have no claim, by merit, to the least mercy: if we obtain it, sovereign goodness reigns. God may withhold it without injustice to us; and, therefore, we should ask, seek, knock, wait for it. "I entreated thy FAVOUR, with my whole heart," said one taught of God. On these principles the apostles acted. They studied the word of God and preached it; but depended on God to make them able ministers and give them success. "We will give ourselves to PRAYER, and to the ministry of the Word." If they were "workmen, not needing to be ashamed," it was because "God gave them hearts to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear."

These duties we should endeavour to perform with "simplicity" of dependance, and singleness of heart, to know and follow the will of God. All our light and strength are from him; it, therefore, cannot be our duty to desire and endeavour to believe, repent, love, hope, and persevere, without the grace of God.

God is "the God of all grace." Without grace there is no hope, holiness, or obedience. If faith and repentance are necessary to salvation, grace is necessary to both, as their cause and support. Are our invisible enemies stronger than we? will they flee if we resist them? Yes, if "God giveth more GRACE." This is the religion of a fallen creature and the root of all religion: *dependance on God*. Of the religion of innocence, we know nothing by experience; nor can we ever expect to know it. We shall never forget that we have *sinned*, and are *redeemed* and renewed by *grace*, Rev. i. 5, 6. This language harmonizes with the reign of grace in the kingdom of heaven on earth and in glory: "Unto him that LOVED us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Do we reign over the world, and sin, and self? "HE hath MADE us kings." Do we offer our bodies and souls to the service of God? "He hath made us PRIESTS to God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever,—Amen." We are lost sinners. Is salvation desirable?—Is it possible?—Is there a Saviour revealed? How can we obtain salvation by him? The Bible answers these inquiries: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!" If you credit this declaration, you will pray both for faith and salvation. Faith in it will produce *prayer*. "How shall you CALL on him in whom you have not BELIEVED?" If you believe and pray,—"WHOSOEVER shall CALL on the NAME of the Lord, shall be saved."

No. CXXXII.—Remarks on Phil. chap. iii. ver. 1.

"*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*"

Important exhortation! enough one would think to silence those who misrepresent the religion of Christ, as tending to *melancholy*. Carnal souls! deriving no joy from Christ themselves, they venture to say (whatever they *think*), that no one else does. *Hush!* ye deriders of real godliness, hush! the groans which may be forced from you on the bed of affliction and death, the wild concern and hopeless sorrow, which are seen in many of you in *that* hour, are loud-speaking witnesses to the value of a *joy in the Lord*, and equally evidences, *that* religion to be a *joyless* one, which *you* have embraced.

Descend, blessed Spirit, and guide the thoughts of the writer in considering, first, *The duty itself*, "rejoice in the Lord." *Joy* is a pleasing emotion of the mind, in which it cleaves to and delights in an object of real or supposed excellence. The mind obtaining *satisfaction* in the possession or prospect of some suitable good, *exults*, in an easy and lively agitation and exercise of the affections, in proportion as the object is excellent, equal to its *wants* and *desires*, and easily attainable.

It is not a joy merely *natural*, as when the animal spirits are enlivened, and the mind is gladdened by any *natural* good; as the return of health, agreeable relations, the company of friends. It is not a joy merely *rational*, as a father feels in the *wisdom* of his child, (Prov. xxiii. 24). It is not a carnal joy in the common blessings of life, as the *widow* rejoices in her seasonable relief (Job xxix. 13); or, the husbandman in the increase of his corn, flocks, oil, and wine, (Is. ix. 3; Ps. iv). It is not the joy of the *hypocrite* which is *momentary*, (Job xx. 5), arising from the success of his business, the good opinion of others, the brightness of his gifts, the extent of his influence, the piety of his relations, the friendship of ministers, the good he has done, and the evils he has suffered through his profession: or arising from a feigned faith, a false repentance alarming convictions, a carnal love to spiritual persons; in short, some *false hope*, begotten by false views of revealed truth, and cherished by a false experience within, and pleasant circumstances without, which in the end *withers* away, (Mat. xiii. 20). Least of all, is it sensual, envious or malignant joy. It cannot *consist* with that temper which "rejoices in *iniquity*." It is spiritual in its *author* and *objects*, its *nature* and *properties*, its *tendency* and *effects*.

And is *this* the injunction of the Holy Ghost—*rejoice!* Such a command cannot be *grievous*, the amount of which is, reflect on

provisions made for your safety and happiness in Christ Jesus. Believe the doctrines, embrace the promises, obey the precepts, and triumph in the Lord, in whom your believing soul is blessed in both worlds. Live above the world; be not oppressed by any or all opposition, but exult in your full and certain bliss in the favour of God in Christ.

But has a believer just *reasons* for rejoicing? If *he* has not, who has? When a believer in Jesus Christ is forbid to rejoice in the Lord—then, wretched world, what a condition are thy slaves in! *Nothing* but misery and woe, can be found in thee. Think, thou favoured soul—think of

2dly, The *Grounds* of thy joy in the *Lord*. Behold the divine glories and human perfections, which meet in him as one mysterious person. The PERSON of your Redeemer, one who is God in *thy nature*, God-man fulfilling the precept, and bearing the penalty of the law *in thy stead*. What a *suitableness* appears in him who is "God manifest in the flesh," to be my Saviour! Can you repeat the name IMMANUEL without emphasis, without emotion, without joy? God with us, Immanuel! Kindle, my soul, while I write, and say to your fellow-heirs, "Glory ye in his holy *name*."

The UNDERTAKING of thy Redeemer is very ancient. The world was not in being when it commenced. "He was set up from EVERLASTING," as the chief of all the ways of God, in the surprising constitution of his person, as God-man, agreeing to assume our nature, in the appointed time, and fulfil every engagement on our behalf. Even *then*, his delight was with the sons of men."—Can I look back and see this *Elect Head*, at the "top of the Book of Life," and my name written under it, as chosen in him, and not rejoice, that *my* name was written in Heaven. *Boast* ye deluded Jews, in your "endless genealogies"—*smile* ye sons of rank and wealth at your riches, your titles, and honours—please yourselves in reading over the long list of your renowned ancestors;—but *thou* who hast chosen Jesus for thy Saviour and Lord, turn from these shadows of distinction, and look up to the register of Heaven, and read thy name in the list with Jesus, and all whose names are in "the Book of Life." Join to this, the GRACE AND OFFICES of the Lord Jesus. No ignorance should discourage thee whilst *he* is thy *teacher*, sit at his feet by faith and prayer, and read and hear his words, until thy clouds and perplexities depart. Refresh thy conscience with his atoning blood, rely on, and plead his finished and freely imputed righteousness to maintain thy peace with God. Wait for the *fruits* of his *intercession*, and *kingly power*, in the regulation of thy affections, the purity of thy conscience, and the joy of thy soul. His invitations are *sincere*, his promises are faithful, and both breathe *grace*, and bespeak HIS SUFFICIENCY, as another source of joy in Christ. "He is *able* to save to the *uttermost*," to the last, to *perfection*. His ability is founded in the dignity of

his person, the perfections of his divine nature, the completeness of his atonement, and the prevalency of his intercession. It is an ability arising from his *office*, and his ability to discharge that. Child of God! if you have a want which he cannot supply, guilt which he cannot pardon, enemies which he cannot conquer, or evils and fears which he cannot remove,—then *mourn* without ceasing, for thy case is desperate and beyond remedy. But if God can and will supply *all* your wants, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus; if you can do all things through Christ strengthening you—if his ability is infinite, and his love equal to his ability—if he is both a *faithful* and *compassionate* High Priest, to fulfil his promises and exert the fullness of his power to save thee completely and eternally; then let thy mourning be turned into JOY—set no limits to your exultation. "If any man glory, let him glory in the *Lord*, and sing—

> "Christ is my life, my *joy*, my hope,
> Nor *can* I sink with such a prop."

What! is it no matter of joy to hear the Redeemer say, "my grace is sufficient for thee;" at all times, in all conditions, and for all purposes which promote thy real good. You may *read* this and be sorrowful, but you cannot steadily *believe* it, without *rejoicing* in the truth of it; and this joy is promoted by considering that CHRIST IS THE GLORIOUS MEDIUM OF ALL COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER. "There is *forgiveness* with God," but not without shedding of blood, the *precious* blood of Christ. All the *Father's* grace, wisdom and love, shine into the *believing* soul, through him who said "I am the way,—no man cometh unto the *Father*, but by *me*." Through, and in *Him*, "God is love," in all he gives, in all he *denies*; in all his smiles and frowns,—in all the trials and blessings of life and death,—God is love to the soul believing in Jesus, whom he hath sent. To such a soul, to such a *sinner*, God the Father is love, in all he says, in all he does. God to him, is *all* love, and love in *all*. This *believed*, leads a soul to the Father, as *his* Father; cherishes the spirit of *adoption*, that is a spirit of liberty in approaching to God, and a spirit of love which issues in confidence and freedom of *speech* in speaking to God.—He not only thinks, hears, reads of God—knows, believes, loves, and obeys God; but he *joys* in God through Christ, by whom he receives the reconciliation, (Rom. v. 11). Christ becomes *dear* to a soul by a knowledge of his saving power, as *Mediator*; and the Father *endears* himself to a soul, by appearing in his grace and goodness *in* Christ, and *through* him. The *countenance* of the *Father* filled Christ with joy, (Ps. xvi. 11). And his countenance, or favour in Christ, has the same effect to a *believer* in Christ.

Dear Watts! when "the love of God is thus *poured* into the heart by the Holy Ghost," we can join with you and sing,

"Great God, indulge my humble claim
Thou art my hope my joy, my rest;
The glories that compose thy name,
Stand all engaged to make me blest."

Go then, thou highly-favoured soul! Go, "unto God as thy *exceeding* joy, in Christ Jesus, (Ps. xliii. 4.)—a joy exceeding every other, in *kind* and degree—in its author and sources—in its objects and duration.

Mistaken worldlings! go on *dreaming* of happiness, and despise the christian, as weak in his intellect, superstitious in his devotions, and melancholy in his disposition; but, strangers to God! he knows a joy which you intermeddle not with, and therefore cannot judge of its nature. He has *tried* your present pursuits, and has seen the *end* of the creature: but you have never tried *his* course, if you had, you would cease to wonder, and join in his language,—

"Nor fruits nor vines that tempt our taste,
Nor all the joys our senses know,
Could make me so *divinely* blest,
Or *raise* my cheerful *passions* so."

Rejoice in the *Lord*, not only in the eminence of his person, character, grace, and love, but

Secondly, In him, in distinction from creature-springs of joy, either *himself* or others. No excellence, natural or acquired; no distinction of birth, rank or wealth, or creature-smiles, are the springs of *this* joy. No, it depends on no such perishing objects. When Haman received an invitation to a banquet with the king and queen, he went home *joyful*, and with a glad heart, (Esther v. 9). This joy *man* could *take from* him: it began and was cherished by the creature, and therefore was easily *interrupted*, and soon *extinguished*. But the joy of a *believer* in Jesus Christ, is "the *fruit* of the Spirit," and till that *root* fails, it will be found true. "*Your* joy no man taketh from you."

The joy here recommended, is that which *lives* upon Christ. *Bereaved* of the nearest relatives, the dearest friends, and most, or all the comforts of life;—*opposed* by the nearest relatives, the dearest friends, and the bitterest enemies; tempting devils,—approaching death and judgment,—neither, nor *all* can take away the real grounds of the believer's triumph in Christ, and at times they cannot even hinder the *exercise* of it. Neither are the *moral* and *spiritual* attainments of a believer, the objects of his rejoicing. No, compared with *Christ*, and his *fullness*, his *legal* and *evangelical* works are *dross*; and he *esteems* them so, (Phil. iii. 7-9). Many a christian continues poor, and many a professor deceived, by living on *past experience*. The christian is recollecting a favourite season of spiritual enjoyment, which passed five or ten years ago, and thus contents himself, without a *present* experience of the efficacy of truth, and the privilege of rejoicing in the Lord *now*. Such do not

humbly, and wisely "*forget* the things that are *behind*, and reach forward unto the things that are *before*." But neither *past* nor *present* experience is the *object* of a believer's joy, but the *Lord*,—in the glories of his *person*, the greatness of his *love*, the excellence of his character, the nature, design, and perfection of his *work*, as a *Redeemer*,—these, *these* are things in Christ, which belong to his peace and joy. The *sincerity* of Christ, in his invitations, his *faithfulness* to his promises, his *power* to save, and his *compassion* to exert that power,—*these* are the *grounds* of his triumph. His *experience varies*;—but *these* things remain *unchanged*, for "Jesus Christ is the *same*, *yesterday*, *to-day*, and for *ever*." Many a *professor* of Christ, who never *knew* him, looks back to five, ten, or twenty years, and remembers some *impressions* from some truth, which occasioned convictions, fears, resolutions, sorrow, reformation, and even *comfort*. These things are the objects and grounds of encouragement to many, and the *only* ones. But the vilest hypocrites may experience such things as these. These things are not *Christ*, they are not the *Lord*;—HE is "*all—in all*." Professed christian! —*think—consider*—if this is all thy religion, thou art *deceived*, and thy joy will die when *you* do, and, perhaps, long before. Rejoice in the *Lord—only* in the Lord, and rejoice as much as thou canst. A soul, that is not in *union* with Christ, may *seem* to be so, by a joy in church privileges, or the gifts of an eminent minister: the knowledge, the language, the action, the zeal, the temper, and life of a minister, may occasion many "for a *season*, to rejoice in *his light*," (John v. 35), who never rejoiced in the *Lord*. Herod heard John *gladly*, but never received *Christ* gladly! but

> "Not earth, nor all the sky,
> Can one delight afford;
> No, not a drop of *real joy*,
> Without *thy* presence, Lord,"

Thirdly. Consider in what point of view the apostle urges this cheering injunction.

1. That we should *value* and *seek* it, as a singular blessing. All who *profess* Christ, do not *believe* in him. All who have a *knowledge* of Christ, do not *rejoice* in him. Many who *believe* in him, have, apparently, more sorrow than joy. They complain of the weakness of their faith, and do not *earnestly* use the means to *increase* it! They suppose themselves *safe*, by being believers, and after making a *few faint efforts* to obtain an increase in light, faith, and joy, drop the design. They are always *beginning* to be more earnest and diligent; but they *only* begin, month after month, and do not *persevere*. When the apostle says, *rejoice* in the Lord, it is as if he had said, search the scriptures daily,—they testify of the Lord: implore the light, grace, and power of the Holy Spirit; cherish every consideration tending to *feed* your joy in the Lord, and guard against every *hindrance* to such a blessing. Consider it

as *attainable*,—as a *growing* grace, and plead the promise in faith. "The meek shall *increase* their joy in the Lord, and the *poor* among men, shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." As *poverty* is no *bar* to this privilege, so riches will neither procure, preserve, nor, in their own nature, hinder it. The rich believer, in the *use* and distribution of his plenty, and the poor, in his labours and supplies, should "rejoice before the Lord their God, in all they put their hands unto," (Deut. xii. 7). True, this command was given to the *Jews*; but Christ is become the light and salvation of the *Gentiles*, who dwell in the tents, and inherit the privileges of Shem. The writer of this is a *believing Gentile*, and if blessed with believing Abraham, and can repeat with pleasure, the exhortation of Saint Paul,—"Rejoice, ye *Gentiles*, with his people," (Rom. xv. 10).

"Still may I see thy tribes rejoice,
And *aid* their triumphs with *my* voice."

The injunction may be considered as directing to—

2. A *becoming duty*. *Becoming*, considering the excellence of the *object* of joy, the *reasons* in him, which a believer has to warrant it, as beyond all comparison rich and strong. Besides, the safety of his *state*, the high *relation* he stands in to God in Christ, the *happiness* of his soul in time, and his prospects for eternity, *demand* a rejoicing frame. Shall a man dead to God, wear a cheerful countenance, and appear joyful, when he has every reason to *mourn*: and shall a believer in Jesus carry a gloomy face, when he has the strongest grounds for joy? Forbid it, blessed God! forbid it, as an unfair report of the nature of real godliness. Christian, bear a *better* testimony for Christ and his truth. Let thy spiritual joy in the Lord, in the liveliest manner, express this truth, "*His* ways are ways of *pleasantness*, and *all* his paths are *peace!*" Is it becoming in an heir of glory, a favoured creature, a saved sinner, who has every proof that he is not only rescued from hell, but entitled to heaven; and knows not when he rises in the morning, but that he shall be in heaven before the sun goes down;—is it becoming, in such a soul, to be always *complaining*, doubting, and fearing?—Is not this the way to bring an evil report upon the good ways of God?—Is it not uncomfortable to *thy own* soul,—disheartening to believers,—dishonourable to God, and tending to confirm the wicked in their opinion of godliness as a *gloomy* thing? Perhaps you reply, what must I do, is this blessing at my *command?* No, it is rather at thy *request*, as a gift of grace. *Seek* it, with *earnestness*, in the diligent use of appointed means, and PERSEVERE in so doing, and then you will not complain long. But if it is to be obtained, in the use of these means, how is it that many persons, apparently believers, go on many years, and some all their days, *without* it? I answer, because many *seem* to be believers, who are *not* so; and many who are *really* so, are *negligent* in the means. They often seek it indif-

ferently, and with a persuasion they shall never *succeed*: or often *begin* to seek it in earnest, but do not *persevere*. Such have only their own *unbelief* and *spiritual sloth* to blame. "*Rejoice* in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is *comely* for the upright,—(Ps. xxxiii. 1).

Another truth which appears in these words is this,

Fourthly. It is a distinguishing description of a believer in Jesus Christ, that he is one that "rejoices in the Lord." I do not say *all* do, in the same *degree*: nor that the same believer is always the same: but the believer indeed, who is what he professes to be, rejoiceth in the Lord Jesus. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, (Phil. iii. 3). *Rejoicing* is a frame becoming a christian, and *Christ* is the immediate *object* of that joy. So far from being a gloomy religion, that the man of God does not act in *character*, if he does not find his heart gladdened by the grace of Jesus. We are the wonder of angels, as *redeemed* sinners, and surely then, their amazement at our *dullness* is not small. They rejoice when we begin to sorrow after a godly sort; and doubtless, they think it strange that our harps are so often hung on the willow. Redemption is all mystery to them; and mysterious it must be to them, that our joy does not kindle into flame, at the sound and sense of such a blessing. Many of our fears, cares, and complaints, must be unaccountable to them, knowing the safety of our state, the grounds of our faith, and the glory of our prospects,

The *first* object that ever was proposed to a *sinner*, as an object of *joy*, was the person of *Christ*, as a SAVIOUR. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. The human body of Christ, conceived in the *Virgin*, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born in a *sinless* state, was the body "*prepared*" for this work. In it dwelt a rational and holy soul, constituting him a *man*. With this *human nature*, taken into union with the "Son of God," he obeyed the divine *law*, and suffered its *just curse*. Through his *obedience* and *sacrifice*, God is gracious to a *believing sinner*. By *believing*, he becomes pardoned through atoning blood, and *justified* through a divine righteousness. This "breaks the *head*," that is the *policy*, the cunning *craft*, the *plan* and *purpose* of Satan, for the *destruction* of man. The sinner believing in Jesus, has his happiness *restored*, *enlarged*, and for *ever secured*! This pours joy unspeakable into the *saved soul*, and confusion unutterable into the mind of Satan. God the *Father* appears in the *mildest majesty*, the richest grace, and sovereign mercy; through the glorious person, love, and work of Jesus; revealed to the *heart*, in all its overpowering glory, which breeds a joy, a triumph, a glorying in the renewed mind, unknown to innocent Adam, or innocent angels! It is the joy of a *redeemed sinner*! The *wisdom* of God shines *so bright* in this *plan of mercy*; the

honour of the divine perfections so *certain* and *evident*, so great and permanent; the *law* appears so good in its *commands*, and just in its threatenings; that nothing can equal the *disgrace* and *confusion* of the devil, in such an exposure of his *weak malice*, and extreme FOLLY; but the joy of the *redeemed soul*, in surveying his Saviour's triumph over Satan, in the *very nature* which Satan had conquered and ruined. Is it possible for a believing man to contemplate Christ dying! sin forgiven! God his friend! devils ashamed, spoiled, and chained! death disarmed! his soul blest! heaven open for his entrance into it!—Is it *possible* to *believe* all this, and not to *rejoice?*—Believe this who *can*; it is not in my power; and if it were, I should be the most inconsistent man alive. No, my fellow heirs, no! I *cannot* be sad, whilst I believe these truths, but while I think and write of them, "the God of hope *fills* me with *all joy* and peace *in* believing," (Rom. xv. 13). I cannot fear,—I cannot doubt, whilst thus enabled to "believe the record God has given of his Son." When I began to write, I felt some warm emotions in my breast, from these *revealed truths*; but my joy *kindles into flame*, and I am ready to sing

"Hence, and for ever from my heart,
I bid my doubts and fears depart."

No unbeliever can be a subject of *this* joy: the believer, and the believer *only*, can "rejoice in Christ Jesus," truly. We have joy "IN BELIEVING." Not all the combined gifts of prophets and apostles, can enable one soul, for one moment, to rejoice in Christ, without FAITH. It comes, is *preserved*, and *cherished*, by faith: and if *lost*, it can be restored by no other way than a *renewed exercise* of faith. "In him, though we *see* him not (as they had done) yet "BELIEVING we REJOICE!" The apostles had *seen* Christ with their bodily eyes: though, "*now*" he was in *heaven*, they could not see him. But *believing* him to live in glory for them, and that they should soon be *with* him, they looked forward with the liveliest joy.

This was the object of *Abel's* faith and joy: in Christ the faith of Abel and the mercy of God met. *Enoch's* conscience was relieved, and his heart purified, to walk with God, by "believing in Jesus." Noah, the righteous man, and Abraham the friend of God, saw Christ's day; they saw it and were *glad*, their hearts *danced* for joy, as the word means, (John viii. 56). Joshua and Moses, David and Isaiah, were glad in the Lord Jesus. Impressed with views of Jesus, David speaks of things, touching the King of Glory, and Isaiah's inspired tongue declares the object of his joy and mine, to be, the "child born," the mighty God! the Son given, and the everlasting Father! The more they contemplated *him* whose "sufferings and the glory which followed" they foretold, the more they owned him as "the WONDERFUL!" Sweet singer

of Israel! I think I see thee warmed by meditations on the Saviour of men, taking down thy harp, and tuning thy voice to notes the most elevating, and with a joy "tasting strong of heaven!" It *became* thee, man of God! it became thee, it became the subject, and thy lively joy reproaches my dullness, and spreads shame over my soul.

New Testament believers bear the same character. Saint Paul, whose happiness was rather *improved* than impeded, by his complicated sufferings, tells the saints at Thessalonica to "rejoice *evermore!*" Would he describe a christian to the Philippian church? He is one who "rejoices in Christ Jesus," (Phil. iii. 3). Does he make a solemn declaration of a resurrection to eternal life? "He protests, by his joy in Jesus Christ, (Cor. xv. 3). As if he had said, these are my hopes and expectations, as surely as I rejoice in Christ: as sure as you and I rejoice in Christ, what I say is true. This proves that their joy in him was an evident well-known thing. Poor dull christians! is Christ a wilderness to you, and a land of darkness? Hear Mary's language, and catch her spirit, "my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour," Philip preached Jesus to the Eunuch—he believed on the Son of God, and went on his way,—rejoicing!—(Acts viii. 39). Go thou, believing man and woman, and do likewise, as becometh saints.

No. CXXXII.—Inconsistency.

Our greatest inconsistency appears, where a comparison is drawn between our lives and our prayers;—and it is wise to bring our conduct to this test. Many *pray* well, who *live* ill. Can any thing be more injurious to churches and families?—Is not this one principal reason why some person's families and social prayer-meetings do not prosper? What does it avail how *often* we pray, if God does not *answer* us? If we pray *fervently*, for our children, and instruct them with *indifference*, or seldom—and are more devoted to their *worldly* interest, than to their *souls*;—what *must* the impartial Judge think of us? If we use humble expressions to God, without humility, and betray a haughty carriage to men;—if we pray for the poor as Christians, and grind them as tradesmen—for success to the Gospel, and throw hindrances in the way;—for the peace of the church—and are the first to take offence, and the last to forgive one;—for heavenly mindedness, and indulge a sordid temper;—can we wonder that some persons cannot hear us pray? To hear a person praying that we may love as brethren—and as soon as he has turned his face from the wall, begin to backbite the absent;—or pray ardently that we may bear and forbear—and expect all to be governed by our will:—how ungracious! To be all devotion on our knees, in the

family and in the church, as if akin to angels, and turning our face from God to men, become tyrants in our tempers—who can wonder that amongst such a professor's servants, it should become proverbial, when their master is at family prayer, to say, "the *saint* is praying for us;" and when they observe by the curtain of the window being pulled up, that his prayers are over, to exclaim, "the devil is coming!" Alas! such professors are deceived by the devotion of the countenance and the tongue, which conceals an *unsanctified temper*.

No. CXXXIII.—Friends.

"A whisperer separateth chief friends." Zealous was my affectionate friend; his friendship was strengthened by the bonds of grace and of gratitude. I was the instrument of his conversion. For some years, the expressions of his friendship were by words and deeds. "I owe you even my own self," he often exclaimed; and whilst I have a guinea, you shall never want half a one.

This friend which was "as my own soul," became suddenly cool towards me; "his countenance was not towards me as aforetime." He soon withdrew his heart, his liberality and his company from me. I made no complaint; thinking that God would disclose the cause, in due season. Conscious of the sincerity of my regard, I waited, till I was assured that a person who was jealous of my share in his heart, poisoned his mind against me by a *whisper*—charging him never to disclose it!—After my former friend had bound himself by a promise, to keep the secret, his own mind was distressed. He wished to tell me, but could not. He at length, after seven years' coolness, was convinced that the "backbiter" had injured me, by a slander, injured his peace by deception, and depriving him of his bosom friend—rendered his nights sleepless and mournful, watering his pillow with his tears, and longing for the mutual expressions of interrupted friendship. It was too late; he wished for it—sent the message to me, was taken ill and died, "and his purpose was broken off, even the friendly thoughts of his heart." "What shall be done unto thee, O thou false tongue!" In due time justice will overtake thee—it shall be known that, "thou art fit to grace, a devil's purpose, with an angel's face."

No. CXXXIV.—The Whisperer.

The person who lodges a *secret* slander in the breast of another, is involved in more difficulties than he imagines. He feels *guilt*. How can he relieve himself? If he contradicts it, he fears the imputation of a slanderer. If he says he hopes secretly to *repent* of it

and obtain a pardon—how can his repentance be sincere without making *restitution* to the utmost of his power?

If he attempt to *forget* his sin, and keep it from his conscience, the sin is *concealed*, but not cancelled. There is no peace of God, to the impenitent backbiter. If he would "see God," let him "keep his tongue from evil:" For, "he that covereth his own sin, shall not prosper."

His *peace* must be *disturbed* when he hears a sermon, reads his Bible, pleads a promise, joins in serious conversation, or witnesses a consistent character. Conscience will speak—you have wounded the character of a person who cannot *defend* himself, because you are not an *open* enemy. Your own peace is destroyed. If the secret should be told, *your own* character is wounded. If it be a *minister* who is slandered, his usefulness is destroyed, so far as the false secret is diffused. "One sinner"—One slanderer "destroys much good."

The whisperer should know, that whatever apparent *security from detection* he may promise himself—"there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." He can expose him to the church and the world.

Let him know, whilst concealed—that God can reach him in his worldly interest—permit another to blow on *his* character—withhold peace from him in most distressing seasons—be deaf to his prayers, and render him suspected by the receiver of his slander. To mortify his pride, such persons are often prospered, who are the objects of his envy and censure.

A man who can live under such a sin, may read and hear, and pray and talk—but, not bridling his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart, and his religion is vain!"

No. CXXXV.—The Idle Christian.

Man is an active being. He was made for employment. He *must* be active. As a fallen creature, his exertions take a wrong direction, and when restored by the grace of God, the bias to evil is felt and seen, as opportunity presents itself. This appears in serious persons on declining business. After a life of action, a sudden change to a habit of indolence, generates disease in the body and gloom in the mind. Idleness destroys health and peace; and not being happy himself, a man is willing to find that there are others as uncomfortable as himself. This disposes him to listen to tales of slander, and to retail censures and evil surmises as a relief to a miserable mind. Alas! this by increasing guilt, feeds the disease. Let gentlemen, who retire from business, seriously endeavour to avoid the character of a tattler, a busy-body, a tale-bearer, and a backbiter. It injures their character and destroys their influence, by rendering their religion questionable.

No. CXXXVI.—Support of Ministers.

How defective in liberality, are most Christians! how small a pittance do they spare from their incomes, for the support of the necessitous, and the furtherance of the Gospel! This proves the inefficacy of their knowledge, and the weakness of their faith, if not in many cases, the total absence of it. Look at the generality of professors, in their conduct to their ministers, and what do you see, in searching for their liberality, but their selfishness! They subscribe, perhaps, from one to four—from two to eight guineas a year. For what purpose? The support of the *minister*, they wish it to be thought—when in reality, it is for the accommodation of themselves and their families with a pew. And as a proof that their own convenience regulates their subscription, one asks for the *cheapest*, a second for the most commodious, a third for the largest, because the family is numerous, but not one, perhaps, pays a sixpence more than they are *obliged* to pay. If they could obtain their pew for less money, they would gladly do it. The fact is, then, that such niggards do not subscribe one farthing to the minister; but to their own comfort! Yet some of these persons think they have a wonderful claim on the minister, and think he ought to pay them a great attention for their liberality! If you do not call and pay them homage for their ideal generosity, you offend, and some intimation is given of the minister's great obligations. Can such persons really *believe* the Gospel, and *feel* their *obligations* to God and a faithful minister? They think the Redeemer and his ministers are honoured by their attendance! If they subscribe nothing, they think they deserve praise for their attendance; and if they subscribe a little, they think it no small offering. Can such persons think highly of the Gospel, and lowly of themselves? They may *call* themselves *unprofitable servants*, but *think* not themselves to be such! Are these the persons who believe the Gospel to be of more worth than thousands of gold and silver? How can I think their faith *unfeigned?*—Out of thousands a year, they do not afford hundreds for its support: nor does he who has a thousand a year, give an hundred for the support of God's cause. If *words* will do, or even *prayers*, you may have them; but they will be niggards to a minister of character and talents; and on several servants, horses or dogs, they lavish that property, the fifth, tenth, or twentieth part of which, might render their minister comfortable. Their houses and furniture, their food, drink and clothing, and perhaps their carriage and gardens, shew you what they do esteem more than God, his gospel or his minister—namely themselves!

The minister may be called ungrateful, and they assure you they would not mention it but to shew his ingratitude, but they tell you

the sum they pay yearly. And what is the sum? why he pays his minister, God's steward of manifold grace—the instrument designed to promote his salvation, by his studies, his public labours, and perhaps by his life;—he pays this minister of God, less than he pays his footman! Yea, he does not pay his minister a third part of what his servant costs him. You may hear of their *large families* as an excuse for paying no more to their minister; and that the taxes become very heavy. But their large families and the taxes do not hinder their self-indulgence. They can spare much, notwithstanding their large families—for their *own* gratification. Is it not probable, that God will make *heavier* demands on that property, so little of which is devoted to him? Can we wonder at increasing taxes? We see men sowing their natural things "sparingly;" can we wonder they reap spiritual edification sparingly? Has not God declared, that he who soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly? And does not this account for the little profit and comfort many hearers receive to their souls? Excuses for the omission of such a duty, so reasonable in itself, so plainly enjoined and so much encouraged in the Scriptures, are signs of the power of some sin over the mind, and the absence of divine influences. The neglect is a sin; but it is often covered by such pretexts as these.—"I cannot afford it—the minister does not need it—I do not like the manner in which he spends it. What! have *you* a right to spend your minister's property? What you withhold is his due. You may as well detain the property of your coal-merchant, because you think he does not need it. "Render unto all their due;" this is a rule of *justice*. A rule for *you*, as a hearer of the gospel. Ask your bible and your conscience, with an eye on your ability and your obligations—what is due from me to my minister? Do I give him his due?

No. CXXXVII.—True Humility.

Why are Christians often distressed because their humiliation is not sufficiently deep?

1. They do not distinguish between the disposition and its outward expressions. Some wounds bleed *inwardly*: others show more blood, though not so deep. Humility is too often measured by tears and words; by horrors and complaints. Many sigh who cannot weep and mourn without tears.

2. They forget the ends of humiliation; to hate and forsake sin and capacitate the soul for receiving Christ.

3. They fix a wrong standard. The operations of humility vary with a person's besetting sin. In one man, pride of understanding prevails; he shows his humility, by submitting his reason to the word. Another self-righteousness—which is opposed by trusting in the obedience of Christ.

A third, by the power of the flesh; and his power over it and peculiar love of chastity, shows the heart subdued. A fourth by impatience under the cross, manifests humility by submitting to it.

4. Some wish to be humble before they believe: but faith produces humility.

5. An increase of knowledge of obligation, knowledge of duties, knowledge of the heart, knowledge of advantages, produces low thoughts of ourselves and our attainments.

No. CXXXVIII.—Solitude in Affliction.

One of the advantages of afflictive dispensations is, a love of *solitude*. Here the mind reviews its past busy scenes, forms a juster value of its pursuits, estimates its own state, character, and prospects; collects its thoughts from their dissipated range, and unites their energy on subjects of endless moment. Here, too, unable to derive proportionable aid from the creature, the soul pours forth its desires, groans and tears, to God. Public prayer may be occasioned by custom, but private prayer becomes necessary under sanctified trials.

It is one branch of wisdom, to obtain proper views of *afflictions;* and observe how they are described by God himself (whose thoughts are not as our thoughts), and how *good* and *bad* men judge of them. This difference can only be ascertained by a comparison of our experience, and observation, with the testimony of God.

The natural operation of trials on the minds of even good men, is often very distressing.

The representation which Job gives of his trials, and the effects they produced on him, are a striking illustration of this truth: "thou puttest my feet in the stocks, and lookest narrowly into all my ways, and puttest a print on the heels of my feet." A person put into the stocks, is *apprehended* as a malefactor. Our afflictions are the stocks, and Job saw a divine hand and felt its power, regulating his trials. The instruments in his trials might be visible: but he looked beyond them; saying, "THOU puttest my feet in the stocks." This preserved him, so far as it prevailed for venting his resentment against the immediate agents in his sufferings. It induced him to examine his heart and life, as he was certain God never acted without reason. "Show me wherefore THOU contendest with me."

This thought sinks the mind into humble submission. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth (to censure man, or murmur at my trial), because THOU didst it."

A person in the stocks, is uneasy from the *restraint* he is under; he cannot esca[illegible] affliction restrains us from lawful pursuits of business, d[illegible]our usual enjoyments, and renders us incapable of [illegible]s the *passions*, pride, self-will, cove[illegible]he *vindictive* passions are

checked, and diminished by the full employment of our thoughts on our own bodies and minds.

Like a man in the stocks, the sufferer finds his natural and social comforts abated, and his sinful pleasures embittered. "His affliction for the *present* is not joyous, but grievous." Some persons seek, and others affect nothing but *comfort* in affliction. Is this *God's* design? Does he afflict for our *comfort?* Would not the *removal* of the affliction answer this end, to a considerable degree? Serious persons are tempted to *appear* comfortable when they are not so; and judge themselves and the dispensation, by the degree of comfort they receive, rather than the PROFIT they experience, because injudicious ministers and Christians have made comfortable frames in affliction, a *criterion* of their state.

No. CXXXIX.—ZEAL FOR GOD.

THERE are settled ministers and village preachers, who, by their great professions, diligence, liberality and concern for the salvation of souls, promise to the church, refreshment and fruitfulness; but under this appearance "seek their own glory;" and prove to be, "clouds without water."

It is no uncommon thing for persons governed by a party spirit, to deceive themselves and attempt to deceive others, by professing to have the glory of God, and the good of souls for their end. When, alas! nothing can be farther from their hearts. "With the mouth, they show much love" and zeal, whilst covetousness or pride, prejudice or resentment, aversion to a faithful ministry, or the lust of power, actuate them.

This self-deception is evident to others, by their *silence* in not mentioning an hundred instances of conversion by the minister whom they oppose; by their indifference to those church-meetings where the Lord's dealings with souls are related, whilst they blow the trumpet to extend one instance of an *apparent* conversion, by the man who is their tool. Nay, they will endeavour to *conceal* the usefulness of a faithful minister, or obscure it, to gratify their party-malignity.

This is surely diabolical. Nay, it is to be feared, that *Loquacious,* who is a bold and zealous professor,—would rather a soul remained unconverted, than that the minister he defames should have the honour of turning him to God!

And still worse, I have heard the same tongue that spread the fame of the minister for usefulness to *many* souls, after taking offence, deny his usefulness to any one!

In one instance, a person who gave me her written experience, in which she gratefully mentions the instrument of her conversion;—

afterwards, to mortify him for some offence he had given, she attributed her conversion to another minister.

The *Lord's glory* and *the good* of *souls*, are words of course, on their tongues, whilst—A NAME—a *religious reputation* is the end. Or, *one* malignant mind may influence many by "fair speeches," to believe his falsehoods and make them his tools for party purposes; for there are in every Christian society, *weak* brethren—false brethren, or both.

These deceived persons have the glory of God and the good of souls, always ready to conceal "the poison of asps under their lips;" for they employ months and years in slander, and no one comes out of their company uninjured. *Mendax* will introduce himself to you on the subject of the Missionary or Bible Society.

His name stands a subscriber of from one to ten pounds, or more. Having gained your ear, he brings forward the character he intends to strike; which is frequently that of a minister of the gospel. But pause, self-deceiver;—does thy defaming a minister's character,—censuring the church as severe in discipline, because faithful,—tend to glorify God? Why do you prejudice souls against a useful minister? Is it to promote his usefulness, and their good?

Those persons who are most forward to proclaim their zeal and faithfulness, are always to be suspected. Jehu covered his cruelty and ambition, by—"come, see my zeal for the Lord!"—Zeal for the Lord? No, he was zealous for his own honour and gratification.

No. CXL.—HYPOCRITES.

THE hypocrite boasts of liberty, and walks as a slave to some sin. Prosperity is to him a sign of divine favour; godliness is his trade for gain. Believe his heart is good when his life is evil, and he gives it the name of charity. He hears the gospel, and loves the world; and like Demas, makes gain the rule of conscience, and leaves this minister to complain,—"Demas has forsaken me; having loved the present world." Anxious in affliction for deliverance from disease and trouble; joyful in his health, and prosperous business; he talks of heaven, is weary of the world in its crosses, and yet cleaves to the world. He affects to repent, fearing death and hell; and when relieved from fear, stops the vein of sin from bleeding, lest he should endanger its life. If, then, he use his gifts in prayer or preaching, to shine, not be useful.

No. CXLI.—Men of No Principle.

There are many persons in these days of freedom from violent perfection, who are dissenters, because education, marriage, money, has made them such. A change of circumstances would lead them to profess to be members of the Established Church. If a party *between* the church and dissent is found, and a suitable temptation presents itself, they join *them*. They profess *moderation*, and call the consistent man who acts on principle, a *bigot*. How comes it to pass, that these persons, on another change of circumstances, return, and *again* they become dissenters or churchmen? Why so yielding to circumstances? — It is easy to account for their encouraging profession; they have no *principle*: their moderation is *indifference* to principle. Instability of principle produces inconsistency of conduct; for "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." He can think, act, and speak one way this day, and change with the first wind. The fact is, he is not a churchman; nor a dissenter; nor a man of moderate principles as he pretends: he acts not from *principle*, but convenience, covetousness, lust, thirst for power, or resentment:—or he has LOST HIS CHARACTER with that society which he has left, or rather perhaps, which expelled him. Do not suppose him *fixed*.—No! "he will *turn*,—*return*,—*overturn*,—take *any turn* to serve his own turn."

No. CXLII.—Suitable Behaviour in Public Worship.

How important is a suitable behaviour in the House of God!—Important to the person who exhibits it, as a lively, fixed attention is necessary to his profit; but, if careless hearers are encouraged in their indifference, by my example, by seeing in me the wandering eye, varying postures, listlessness, heaviness, or levity, what serious *injury* have I done! My *minister* too,—how painfully discouraging to *him*, to see me unable to sit *one hour* to hear a sermon, without evident restlessness, when he knows I can sit quietly a *whole afternoon*, to hear the news and chit-chat of the day! Perhaps the minister of God has a succession of painful thoughts rapidly passing through his mind,—that hearer's heart is "going after his covetousness," or his passions are exercised on objects unknown to me: but as I have scarcely his *ear*, I am sure his *heart* is not interested in my subject. Let me turn my eyes from this discouraging, chilling hearer, and look at a more *interesting* hearer. There he sits:—I know where to find him, and relieve myself: he is a poor man, living in all the simplicity of faith in divine truth. He understands, believes, enjoys, and exclaims, "Verily thou art a man of God; and the word of God in thy mouth is truth!"

No. CXLIII.—Reprobates.

"Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Reprobates! that is, *disapproved* and *rejected* of God! In the church of Corinth too, where such various and resplendent *gifts* abounded? *Reprobates!* hearing the gospel? hearing a *Paul* preach Christ? Reprobates! after joining in church communion at the Lord's-table? *Reprobates!* after two epistles of instruction and admonition? *Reprobates!* after convictions, sorrows, persecutions, the good opinion of the members of the church? *Reprobates!* after witnessing the fall of some professors, to *warn* us; and the *power* of grace in others, to encourage us? *Reprobates!* after visiting the sick, taking our turn in prayer at the Prayer-meetings? *Reprobates!* after the reproofs we have given to saints and sinners; and after the reproofs we have received ourselves, in sermons, *personal* and *relative afflictions*? *Reprobates!* after the *fears* which have agitated us, the tears we have shed, the *means* of grace we have attended, and the vows we have made? Prayed in the family, the closet, and *yet reprobates!* Conversing on religion with good men,—reproving bad men,—singing the praises of God with the congregation, with a loud voice, and *reprobates!* Instructing the ignorant in Sunday Schools, sanctioning the Missionary, Bible, and Tract Society, by my presence, my voice, and my purse, and yet a *reprobate!* In the office of village preacher, a deacon, a settled minister, and a *reprobate!* an admirer of ministers, bringing others to hear the gospel, and a *reprobate!* *Sound* in my *sentiments*, regular in my *attendance on ordinances*; mourning over the negligence of others, and a *reprobate!*

Instrumental in the conversion of souls, by persuading them to hear the gospel, by my example in hearing it, by giving them bibles, and a *reprobate!* Speaking against sin, opposing self-righteousness, encouraging weak believers, and bringing them to the Lord's-table, and a *reprobated!* Reading the word of God to, praying with the sick, and affording them temporal relief, and yet a *reprobate!*

Yes, all this may be *said*, and *felt* and *performed*, and yet you may be *reprobates*.

Pride, self-righteousness, unbelief, the lust of the flesh, the lust of money, the lust of power, the lust of reputation, the lust of singularity, the lust of *party*, the lust of self-exaltation after all, may govern you. You may trust in "the littleness of your sins; and the sufficiency of duties to counterbalance them," and, after all your advantages, and professions and feelings, be *a reprobate, a cast-away*, a *rejected* character!

But granting that my present character is such, that a holy God must disapprove and reject; may I not repent and believe, and be

saved? It is possible. We rejoice to tell you, "all things are possible with God;" and he *may* convert your soul.—Then why use so awful a term as that of *reprobate*, in describing my state? The answer to this objection is easy: God *himself* thus describes your state in his word, as that which will expose you to *final* reprobation, if you *die* in this condition. And the word *reprobate* is no more awful, than charging you with impenitence and unbelief. Or saying you are unholy, you are a hypocrite, you are in an unconverted state: for such characters God must reprobate. Yet, as you may be converted, why speak of you as *already* a reprobate, as if you never should repent? Because though your conversion be *possible*, it is not *probable;* considering that God *generally* converts souls, under the *first* years of their learning the gospel; and that you have so long *tried* the remedy in vain! You have conquered the calls, the warnings, and encouragements of the gospel. You may have felt deep convictions, powerful impressions of the truth; felt "the powers of the world to come;" and now, you hear and read, and converse on religion without feeling, or with much less feeling, as if you now doubted the truth and importance of the gospel. What is now to impress your soul? There is no other remedy to try on your spirit. Can any statement be more *alarming* you ask? Does it not tend to produce *despair*? It is alarming: and we wish you to take the alarm, and flee for refuge to the Saviour, as "the hope set before you."

If your alarm should produce the anxious inquiry, reprobate as you are, "what must I do to be saved?" Our answer is ready: "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" But if you continue in sin—if you rest in cold notions, however scriptural—if your attendance on the means of salvation is accompanied with habitual indifference and the love of sin, what can you expect, with your Bible before you, but the execution of Christ's sentence—"ye shall die in your sins; and where I am, thither ye canst not come!" Lay this to heart, ye children and youth, who are growing up under the Gospel in an unconverted state — Lay this to heart, ye who are grown up to manhood, or entering old age, with nothing more than "a NAME to live, while ye are dead." Harden not your hearts by familiarity with sin and the truth of God, at the same time—"Behold! now is the accepted time! Behold! now is the day of salvation!"

No. CXLIV.—MEMORANDUM ON SIR EGERTON LEIGH.

SIR EGERTON LEIGH, Baronet.—Last evening, December 24, 1817, I was sent for to the Sun Inn, by Sir Egerton. I went and found him exceedingly ill, having been attended in London two months by two, and sometimes, by three physicians a day. He ap-

peared jaundiced and exhausted, with an intermitting pulse,—all but a corpse. I went for Mr. ——, my apothecary, who came and prescribed for him. I said, "Sir Egerton, he is a friend to religion." He lifted his languid eyes and feeble hands, and feebler voice—"O! what a mercy!" In the morning we again visited him. The milk put into his mouth he could not swallow. He took only four tea spoons full of Madeira and one of brandy. I sat by him with the butler and nurse. He appeared dying. The butler said, "Mr. Cooke is here." He lifted his eyes and held my hand. "Oh! my dear brother—pray—I cannot kneel, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much—much!"

I prayed with him. He was much affected, very thankful. He paused, and then said, "O! sin!"—After silent reflection, he said, "I am in the Lord's hands." The thought of dying at an inn or in his carriage, appeared a mere circumstance: neither guilt, nor fear, nor death moved him. He said, "a better world was before him." Resolved to pursue his long and cold journey, he was placed in his chariot, and took an affectionate farewell. What a Christian superiority to the fear of death did he display! no terror, no anxiety, no confusion, no distrust of God! calm, scriptural fortitude, reigned within. His flesh failed; but "God was the strength of his heart." God of my hope! forbid that this visit should be lost on me. Graciously qualify me to leave life without reluctance in the appointed hour. To enjoy a conscience relieved by mercy through the atonement of Jesus—from guilt, perplexity and doubt. To exercise "a good hope through grace;" in the unclouded prospect of a better world. My God! my hope! let me not witness such scenes in vain. Revive thy work in me. Bid my soul live, live eminently. Give divine principles full dominion over me. This is my heart's desire. Is not that desire from thy grace? Is not that grace an earnest of more? Forsake not—O! "forsake not the work of thine own hands!"

No. CXLV.—Holiness and Happiness.

I consider holiness and happiness as inseparable; and that they can no more be divided or severed from each other, than light can be severed from the sun: and that the manifestation of the divine glory is nothing more than the manifestation of the divine attributes of love, goodness, truth, and righteousness, in the person of Jesus Christ. This thought is finely illustrated by a great divine whom I shall quote for the pleasure and improvement of the reader.

"We rather glorify God by entertaining the impressions of his glory upon us, than by communicating any kind of glory to him; *then* does a good man become the tabernacle of God wherein the Shechinah does rest, and which the divine glory fills, when the frame of his mind and life is wholly according to that idea and pat-

tern which he receives from the Mount. We best glorify him when we grow most like to him; and we then act most for his glory, when a true spirit of sanctity, justice, meekness, &c., runs through all our actions; when we so live in the world as becomes those that converse with the great mind and wisdom of the whole world, with that almighty Spirit that made, supports and governs all things, with that being from whence all good flows, and in which there is no spot, stain, or shadow of evil; and so being captivated and overcome by the sense of the divine loveliness and goodness, endeavour to be like him, and conform ourselves as much as may be to him."

"When God seeks his own glory, he does not so much endeavour any thing without himself. He did not bring this stately fabric of the universe into being, that he might, for such a monument of his mighty power and beneficence, gain some panegyrics or applause from a little of that fading breath which he had made. Neither was that gracious contrivance of restoring lapsed men to himself, a plot to get himself some eternal hallelujahs; as if he had so ardently thirsted after the lays of glorified spirits, or desired a choir of souls to sing forth his praises. Neither was it to let the world see how magnificent he was. No, it is his own internal glory that he most loves, and the communication thereof which he seeks."

"It was a good maxim of Plato, which is better stated by St. James; 'God giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' And by that glory of his which he loves to impart to his creatures, I understand those stamps and impressions of wisdom, justice, patience, mercy, love, peace, joy, and other divine gifts, which he bestows freely upon the minds of men. And thus God triumphs in his own glory, and takes pleasure in the communication of it. As God's seeking his own glory, in respect of us, is most properly the flowing forth of his goodness upon us; so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavouring a participation of his goodness, and an earnest incessant pursuing after divine perfection."

When God becomes so great in our eyes, and all created things so little, that we reckon upon nothing as worthy of our aims or ambitions, but a serious participation of the divine nature, and the exercise of the divine virtues, love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, and the like: when the soul beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavours after the greatest resemblance of God, in justice, love and goodness, when conversing with him, by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness, and power of his goodness, we endeavour to assimilate ourselves to them; then we may be said to glorify him indeed. God seeks no glory but his own; and we have none of our own to give him. God in all things seeks himself and his own glory, as finding

nothing better than himself; and when we love him above all things, and endeavour to be most like him, we declare plainly that we count nothing better than he is.

No. CXLVI.—On Reading the Scriptures regularly.

The Bible is seldom read impartially; too often very carelessly. It is too common for christians to read no more to their families, than one long or two short chapters a-day. And, crowding family duty into a corner of the day, they, tired and heavy, snatch up the Bible, and read, very frequently, a *short psalm*. The Psalms are a most delightful part of the Sacred Scriptures; but then, they are but a *part*: and even that part is not read from affection, but *conveniency*, at such seasons. But what is still worse, a great number of christians read no more of their Bible, than what they thus read to their families. They read but little; that little hastily, and in form, and have no time to read a chapter in *solitude*, with thought, prayer, and self-application.

But the Bible should be read the more attentively, and the more frequently, on account of its *size*. If it contained an answer to all the *subtle* questions, which the pride and curiosity of many have started, it must have consisted of many folio volumes! But the inconsistency of such persons, in requiring an answer to many uninteresting questions, appears in these two things: first, their questions relate to what is more nice than just; to what, if answered, might amuse for a moment, but *could not* profit. If the questions proposed, related to the security, the honour, the interest, and happiness of one soul, they would challenge our notice, and to appearance, impeach the Bible of imperfection: but they are frivolous and foolish: an answer to them would *injure* the reader, by diverting his thoughts from better things. Indeed, if many had their wishes in finding such answers to such questions as would satisfy their enquiries, they would instantly object to the Bible on that ground, and exclaim, surely! a book divine in its original, never could contain such trifles! What are these things to the eternal interest of man! And their inconsistency appears equally evident in this, that while they complain of the Bible information being so contracted, most of them never read the *whole* of it in their lives! and some of them never read one-half of it! Blush! blush! Infidel. Out of thine own mouth art thou condemned. *Infidel*, did I say? Blush *christians* also; scores, hundreds, thousands of you never have read the Bible through, even once in the long profession you have made.

This precious book contains *general* rules, to be applied to particular cases: but this proves the necessity of an attentive reading. Every christian's life produces more cases than his Bible rules.

And if he is acquainted with few of them, he must often be at a loss. Mr. Baxter and Perkins have written large volumes on cases of conscience; but who can read them?—very few; and of those few, who can remember them?—fewer still. The Bible contains enough; but it is not enough *known*; if it were, it would be found "sufficient THOROUGHLY to furnish the man of God, for EVERY good word and work." Wonder not that christians are at a stand in their voyage towards heaven; it is not for want of a *compass*, but because they are too little attentive to, and acquainted with it. What avails a map of the county, however excellent, if unknown? What signify the plainest directions of a traveller, if he puts them in his pocket, and reads them not?

2. The Bible contains the THOUGHTS OF GOD, upon every thing necessary for man to know in this world. Is it not surprising then, that christians, and (how shall I write it?) ministers of the gospel should thirst for every new book of human composition, and ungratefully neglect God's thoughts and words? Is not this a mortifying proof of a disposition to creature dependance? And is it not probable that we shall find them "broken cisterns," if we thus slight the *fountain*? What are the *consequences* of this disposition? The anxious mind is generally disappointed,—the Bible remains a dark book,—the soul obtains little information, confirmation, or comfort. Besides, the Bible containing the thoughts of God, the ideas of an *infinite* mind! how can we expect to understand them, by a slight reading? What pride to think so! What self-sufficiency in leaning to our own understanding! "God's thoughts are very deep." And are our minds so full of light, so strong, so holy, that a mere *sight* of the words of God, is sufficient for us? Rather let the darkness of our limited and erring souls, render us more attentive to them.

3. The CONTENTS of the Bible are the most interesting, the most instructive, and the most cheering of any other single book, or all other books in the world. If another book has any divine truth in it, the Bible was the *source* of it. Indeed the very *name* it bears, imports as much, viz. the *Bible*, that is, *the Book*. The Book by eminence! The Book of books. The Book of God! The only book that gives *infallible* instruction to man, relative to the works of creation, providence, and redemption.

4. It appears disrespectful to the Bible, to read it, a verse here and a chapter there, without reading it through, at any time. Let the christian always read some part of the Bible, in *order*, every day; and when he has read the whole of it, begin it again, and so on until he dies. While he pursues *this* method, he will not live ignorant of a part of it, as if God had given him superfluous information. If this method is attended to, he may read any chapter, or part of it, or any book of scripture, as often as he will, besides his *regular* course. For every part of sacred scripture is

not of equal importance; and some part is more suitable to the experience, condition, and trials of a christian, than another. This should be attended to with care; and by attending to the first rule, that is, by reading the Bible regularly through, he will be better *acquainted* with its various parts, and in a time of trial, will instantly have recourse to them.

Many Christians never read their Bible through, because, not reading it regularly, they know not which part they read last, or have read most. There are in the Old Testament 929 chapters, and in the New Testament 260 chapters, in all, 1189 chapters in the Book of God. If a Christian reads three chapters a day, he reads the whole Bible in a year, except 94 chapters, which may very pleasantly be read on Sabbath days, in order, so as to read the Bible through regularly once a-year; besides reading particular parts as they suit the state of the reader's mind. Surely, Christians, it behoves you to read the whole of God's mind. Especially since "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable unto doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work." If *all* of it is divinely inspired,—if all of it is *profitable*,—who am I,—who art thou, to slight a part of God's mind, as if you could do without it? This is one way of taking from the words of His book; count the cost of such a conduct, christian, if thou art able. If thou art slighting some part of God's mind, be assured, a dying bed will alter thy views and feelings.

And what objection can a christian have to *regularity*, in reading God's word? Will he say, this is very *formal* work? What! is *order* formality, which thy mind abhors? What! is spirituality confined to a confused manner of thinking, reading, and praying? I think those are guilty of mere formality in reading the Scriptures, who read them most negligently, and most rarely. Christian, you have no objection to order in thy business, thy meals, and thy rest; and art thou the less rich and prosperous, or healthy? And are the concerns of *eternity* alone, the things which may, nay must be attended to without method?

But do not mistake me; I do not mean to substitute this in the place of Christ, nor of any other duty. No; beware lest you be found at this work, in the spirit of a poor woman who, on her dying bed, uttered these words, "Well, I thank God I have read the Bible through, now I shall be saved." Blind soul! She had read but "understood not." There are others who read and understand, but rest in the reading and knowledge of the Bible; and being able to quote Scripture on every occasion, they excite the admiration of fools, which swells them with mere conceit of the safety of their state, while they set up for critics upon all persons and performers but themselves, and their own actions. When I hear such persons

quoting verses of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelations, I hear "parables in the mouth of fools." My mind is hurt, is disgusted, and I exclaim with Solomon, "Excellent speech *becometh* not a fool." I am ready to imagine I hear the devil quoting Scripture again, and to suspect the *design*. Who can bear to hear a person under the reign of pride, pompously repeating God's words? When, perhaps, malice and covetousness are rooted in his heart, over-reaching manifest in his dealings, and a disposition to promote his own dominion over the consciences and conduct of others, is his ultimate end in reading and repeating the Scriptures.

The neglect of a constant attention to the Bible is attended with many serious evils to the Christian. It prevents his *growth in faith*. What is he to believe? The word of God. How can this be, if he does not read it? It is the "word of faith," and faith must *live* upon its testimonies. If a man is negligent of his Bible, he is either weak in faith, or strong in presumption. Often the former; he is not settled, having no *particular* warrant for his faith at hand. He doubts, and wavers. Many things, of which he might be certain, he is not able to prove, however important They *may* be true, and he hopes they are, but is not *sure*. He has not scriptural evidence at hand to *determine* his mind. It also affects a man's COMFORT greatly. In relation to *doctrines*, he takes certain things for divine truths: but, perhaps, cannot *prove* them. And if an advocate of error should *deny* the truth of what he believes, advance things *opposite* to them, and bring a few scriptures, as *apparent proofs* of his errors; this negligent Christian would find his mind unsettled, uncertain and unhappy. Satan would seize the opportunity of confirming his errors, and weakening his faith in the truth. His mind, not being "girt about with truth," lies open to the assaults of bad men and angels. Whereas, if he were "mighty in the scriptures," he could establish the truth, when denied, and confute an error when asserted for truth. He would "take fast hold of instruction, nor let it go; but keep it as his life." Such a conduct leaves a Christian low in comfort, and frequently perplexed with the PROVIDENCE of God. Some of God's actions seem against him, in which he would take comfort, if those Scriptures were at hand, which *explain* the very Providence he stumbles at. God's *action* seems to contradict his *word*, because the action is seen, but the word of God which explains it, is *not seen*. In relation to the Christian's EXPERIENCE, his comfort is affected by his ignorance of the Bible. He would not so often be foiled by Satan, nor discouraged by his *internal* conflicts, if he were better acquainted with the Bible, which is "a history in miniature of the heart of man." He would there find, that his experience was not scriptural, but that it accorded with the word of God, and the experience of the saints of God. Much perplexity about his CONDUCT, also would be avoided. The Christian meets with many trying cases in life. He knows not which course to take. If he

walks with doubt of being right, he is committing sin and sowing misery. Perhaps, many portions of God's word would ease and determine his mind, if he knew where to find them, but through a neglect of this Book, he has no "light to his feet, nor lamp to his paths."

No. CXLVII.—The Last Enemy Conquered.

Death is the christian's last enemy, and a very formidable one he is. But whatever could conspire to render death terrible to human nature, was experienced by Jesus Christ, in his own death. Every unpardoned sinner, dying in his sins, knows what *death* is. Such a person understands the word *death*. But it is only *one* death, one complicated *death* that he dies. His soul is separated from his body, both from God, and cursed with "tribulation and wrath." But the death which Christ died, was—*millions* of deaths in one. And though he did not die the second death, in the manner the wicked do, by entering into hell, yet hell entered into him. The *extent* of his sufferings was beyond what any ever did feel, or ever can. The Lord's-supper exhibits this truth to the mind of every believer. He commemorates that awful event, with emotions of grief, surprise, and gladness. It is not to a Saviour, merely tried and fainting, afflicted and tempted, that he is directed to behold. It is not to hold forth the poverty, or the sickness of Christ, but to "show forth the Lord's *Death!*"—Come see the place where the Lord *died!* The *certainty* of his death is there preached to our eyes; we see him bleeding to death. And *whose* death are we met to remember? It is not the death of a mere man, or a mere martyr, but the *Lord's* death! This increases the mystery, he was a person of spotless innocence, and a person of such dignity, that all the inhabitants of heaven feel his reign, and pay him homage. The glory of his person, the perfections of his character, the nature, extent, and design of his sufferings, are the objects of our contemplation, when we eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ.

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." Heb. vi. 20. Mark the grand object of a Christian's attention, "*even Jesus!*" His hope reaches to *heaven!* Say, worldly minds, when did your expectations reach so high? Do they not rather dwell among objects of *sense*? Take, then, the favour of men, the wealth of misers, the post of honour, and the pleasures of time, I will lift up my thoughts—"I will set my affections on things *above*" your highest aims. If a man of carnal mind lifts his thoughts to heaven, he has a carnal conception of its nature, and supposes he shall come there of *course*. He views heaven as a place of freedom from the trials of life, and conceives he shall enjoy his *ease* there. But the believer's hope is more noble, determinate, and cheering, "even

Jesus!" in whom he sees all the grace and love of *the Father*, and of *the Saviour*. A Christian has no idea of a heaven where Christ, and God in him, is not enjoyed. Yes, scoffing world, even Jesus, is the object of our hope, our joy, our boast! That Jesus whom you despise, we follow as our

FORERUNNER.—This is the character our hope fixes on. He ran the race set before him. He is gone first. He has left our world, and entered into his glory. But even as a forerunner, he acts as a

SAVIOUR, or why is he *still* called *Jesus*? Wherever he is, whatever character he bears, whatever office he may discharge, in each, in all, he ever acts the part of a *Saviour* to his people, in every condition of this life. How suitable a character! how compassionate an heart! how able to discharge the office he sustains. Now mark the

END of his entrance within the vale, "for us." For *us!* for whom? for all who have fled to Jesus as their refuge from the guilt, the reign, and the curse of sin.

Let not the fearful heart say, surely! not for *me!* Why not? Art thou a sinner, unworthy and self-condemned? And art thou looking to Christ as thy portion and pattern? Then be of good cheer! he entered for thee. If he did not enter for you, why do you love him, follow him, lament your ingratitude to him, and confide entirely in him? Art thou poor?—So was he. Art thou tempted?—So was he. And yet he entered heaven, and so shalt thou, as surely as Christ has entered for us—for our *security* and *happiness*. He has

1st. Taken possession of heaven in our nature, and in our name. He is gone to take possession of the "many mansions," and to "prepare a place for us."—John xiv. 1, 2. He makes all things ready for our admittance. He has gone before, and has notified our coming.

2dly. In taking possession of his *own* glory, he intends it for them.—John xvii. 24; Rev. iii. 21; and,

3dly. He manages our concerns, pleads for us his own finished work, and for our "abundant entrance at the proper season." He "*now* appears in the presence of God FOR US."—Heb. xxiv. For us! Here lies the joyful emphasis, for *us*. For *us* he lives, and reigns, and pleads.

St. Paul does not say *my*, but *our* forerunner; which should blow up the feeble spark of love, one to another; not merely as men, as relations, but as *Christians*, interested in Jesus as a forerunner! Yes! my fellow heir, he is gone before *me*, and before *you*. We shall *both* follow him, live with him, and rejoice in the sight of each other's happiness!

Let us also *follow* Christ, in this view. And consider that there is no public or private duty in which we engage, nor any trial we may

be called to endure, but, in it, we are following Jesus, and running *nearer* to the end of our course; we shall soon overtake Jesus! Righteous man! hold on thy way, as Jesus did, and it will issue at last in the place which he keeps ready to receive you.

How necessary the exercise of *faith*, to our enjoyment of Jesus, in this character. He has left the world, and the opening heavens having received him, have closed again, and conceal him from our *sight*. He is on the *other* side of the heavens, which, like a veil, conceal his glory from us: but the Word *reveals* him as managing our affairs in life, and death, and providing for our *entrance*, at the moment of our departure from the body, and from the world: may our souls *realize* this scene by *believing*, and in proportion to the strength of our faith, shall we *feel* this truth. If we could look through the clouds, and see with our *eyes*, Jesus in this character, and the place he has provided for us, how would it affect us? Just as the *declaration* of it does, when we *believe* it. Faith is *mental* sight here.

And should not this reconcile us to death? Jesus is in heaven; but how came he there? He went through the valley of the shadow of death. So must we. And are we unwilling to follow him? Why should we? We shall go the same way, to the same place where *Jesus* is, and he who has secured the mansions, as the purchase of his blood, and raised our hopes towards it by the grace of his spirit, will not fail to secure our *passage*, our *admission*, and our *possession* of it, as the fruit of his INTERCESSION. All the *penal* agonies of death Jesus endured. Death fastened his sting in Christ, and *left* it there. When we die, we shall find death nothing more than a sleep. Believe this, thou child of light: believe it, and exclaim as truly as the author of the words did falsely—"Surely, the *bitterness* of death is *past*."

Guilt, like the dregs of any liquor, at the bottom of the vessel, often lies concealed at the bottom of the heart. While all things without are pleasant and agreeable, we may overlook, and for a a time forget our state *within*; like the liquor in a bottle, which looks clear until it is *shaken*, but then thickens in every part of the bottle; so we, when tossed by some sudden trial, find the dregs of guilt, rise, and overspread the mind with confusion, restlessness and gloom.

No. CXLVIII. YOUNG PREACHERS.

IT is a usual method with young preachers, to address the passions more than the understanding of their hearers. They wish, at almost all events, to *comfort* their hearers. This springs from a thirst for *popularity*, which leads them too often, beyond the bounds of truth.

They take pains to persuade their hearers, that the good work is begun in them, and admit of the lowest proof of such an important point: yea, and sometimes an absurdity is brought as proof—for instance: They ask, have you a desire after grace? and if not, do you *desire to desire*? If you do, the good work is begun, or from whence came that desire? Ah! deceitful comforters. Is the *desire* of a thing, that thing *itself*, or even a *part* of it? Is a desire of health, in the sick man's heart, health itself? Ask the sick man, who looks for health, but it comes not. His desire may lead him to use proper means for his recovery; to ask advice, and use medicine: but neither desire, advice, nor medicine, is health itself.

Is a desire of food, in a hungry man, bread? If so, why does the poor labourer toil and sweat for it? Is the desire of money, in the tradesman, wealth itself? Then, why does not he retire from business? Is the desire of knowledge, in the studious man, knowledge itself? Why then, spend his life in the pursuit of it? No! "the desire of the slothful KILLETH him; for his hands refuse to labour."

But it would be well, if this method of comforting the guilty, were only absurd: but it is highly injurious to hearers of a certain complexion. Persons living in some sin;—holding the unrighteous gains of past sin;—living with a worldly mind, and neglecting ardent and persevering intercourse with God; such persons hearing that a desire of grace is grace; or, that a desire to desire, is grace, or a sure sign of it; they bless themselves in a graceless state, and in the warm impressions of the moment, believe themselves in a safe state, and, extolling the preacher for his discourse, go home, exclaiming, "Well, I trust, I do desire to desire, at least," and Mr. Smooth said "this was a proof that I had grace." Thus, like a dose of poison, rendered very pleasant for the present, to the palate, and proves bitter in the end. The man swells with pride, and grows the more stupid and hardened for the false, though agreeable comfort administered. Every preacher, or writer, who shall contradict that sermon, is harsh and uncharitable.

Suchpreaching is attended with a third evil—it is a reflection on the gospel, as though it did not contain sources of consolation, genuine and adequate to the worst sinner's worst condition. If God's plan is found defective, is it likely that any *human device* will succeed better? Can a real falsehood, prove a source of true, strong and permanent comfort? Man of God! what art thou preaching? No longer tell the lost soul to make lies his refuge: but point him to *Jesus!* open *his* character; display his love; sound forth his death and mediation with God;—tell the sinner the *worst* of himself, to drive him from himself to this suitable, appointed, surprising and profound relief—redemption through the blood of Jesus!

Dextrous young man, one of your hearers says he *desires* grace, though he has none, and you tell him, that desire is grace. Another says, I have no grace, nor, I fear, any desire of grace: well, saith the preacher, but if you have not a *desire* after grace, only desire to desire, that is grace. Such preaching grieves the judicious, relaxes the diligent, deceives the weak, ruins the presumptuous, dishonours the gospel, exposes the preacher.

No. CXLIX.—Ingratitude to Ministers.

Ministerial trials are exquisitely painful. A faithful, laborious minister of Christ, deserves respect from his hearers; and if he has it not, he is useless. And there is every thing in a consistent minister to claim a grateful return from the people of his charge. *Gratitude!* did I say? Why, too many hearers of the Gospel suppose none can be ungrateful but *ministers*. If they make him a present or two in the year, they suppose him under an obligation to them for life; and, perhaps, soon think him very ungrateful, because he does not pay them more homage. If he reproves them for a fault after this, he is *ungrateful!* If their neglects are detected in the pulpit, this they miscall ingratitude. If he is equally kind to others, and shows it by his conversation and visits;—this is *ungrateful!* If he will not flatter them, and their friends, and censure all, in all, which they dislike, *ingratitude* is the charge. But there is a moment coming, when such hearers, will find out their mistake: they will see, and feel too, that *hearers* may be ungrateful to their ministers; a thing of which they have never suspected themselves to be guilty. They will one day know, that the man whose time, and talents were spent to promote the interest of their souls;—the man who spent studious days and sleepless nights, in thinking of them and for them;—the man who spared not the money in his pocket, the strength of his mind and body in their service, was worthy of a grateful return. They will then know, that speaking unkindly of his person, his character, his work, and aims; and grieving his heart by cold words and cold looks, was treating him ungratefully. Go, unfeeling creature! and learn, that such a conduct, is as unworthy of you as a *man*, as it is unworthy of you as a *Christian*. Go, hard-hearted wretch! and know, that such conduct is *ingratitude*. Ingratitude to God, and to his minister;—ingratitude which will make thy conscience uneasy, and thy dying hour distressing. What is thy subscription of a guinea or two towards his support, compared with the spiritual and eternal blessings which the minister is the instrument of conveying to the souls of men? Consider his anxious fears; his strong desires; his tears and prayers on your behalf; and think much of your subscription if you can. Man of

God, be not discouraged, turn thy thoughts from creatures, and ease your soul at that throne, which is gracious; and whoever may slight or forget you: remember your Lord careth for you: he hears your cry. "Think of me, O my God, for good."

No. CL. Improvement of Death.

The most serious objects we meet with, do not impress our minds always alike, and never *profitably*, unless the Holy Spirit works by the solemn objects which rise to our view. Death is a solemn thing. We hear of the death of a near neighbour, or see a near relative dead; we sigh over the former, and exclaim, poor creature! he is gone. We weep over the latter, and our impressions may be deep, lasting and convincing: but not *advantageous*, unless God teacheth by this bereaving providence. What are those tears and sighs; prayers and vows; convictions and self-censures good for, which leave the mind secure, proud, carnal, and giddy? Indeed, a man of carnal mind is *injured* by his impressions, if unsanctified to *convince* and *renew* his soul; because he thinks God will accept all his tears and grief about the dead, as *repentance for his sin!* He thinks it a *clearing* time, and that his sorrow for the dead, is an atonement for the sin of his soul, he fancies his soul cleansed from his sins, when his tears are wiped from his face. That he can feel tenderly for the dead, he numbers among his good works. He charitably hopes the dead person is gone to Heaven, however he might die; and thinks this charity (blind and senseless as it is), which covers the sins of the dead, will cover a multitude of his *own* sins. Perhaps, the dead friend *seemed* penitent; wept, condemned himself, prayed and received the sacrament; and having so done, eased his conscience, and died without any "bands, or difficulties in his death." If so, a carnal person exclaims, dear creature! he died like a lamb; and presumes, that *he* need not be over-solicitous about *his* soul, for when affliction comes upon him, he intends to repent, as his friend did, and thinks, no doubt, God *must* accept him. This is a striking proof of the hardness and deceitfulness of the heart. A third abuse of death appears, in being contented in accounting for the *cause* of death. If they know the disorder which proved mortal to them, and feel no symptom of the same in themselves, they grow the more secure, think themselves out of all danger of death. A young man hears that an old man is dead; and thinks he died because he was old, and that the evil day is *far* from himself. The old man, perhaps, with a mortal disease upon him, hears his old neighbour is dead, and ventures to presume, that his disease is not so dangerous; or, that his doctor treats it differently, and, therefore, he may live a *few* years longer. And do not these plain facts prove, that providences the most distressing and the most alarming, are ineffectual,

without the internal operation of the Spirit of God by them? Why does a man, who sees another linger in sickness, and die, say, poor man! he is released from all his miseries; he suffered so much in this world; surely, he cannot suffer in the next? Such a creature is blind; and sees not, that all the pains of this life, are *trials*. The *next* world is appointed for punishment. Another person blesses himself, when he hears of his neighbour's death, that he does not love and practice the sins in which he lived. He thinks his neighbour's sins were dreadful, and that his own are small; and doubts not but he stands fairest for Heaven, die when he may. Another gives himself no uneasiness about death: for he says, "It is the way of all the earth," and nature's debt, and therefore he shall fare as the rest, and need not be anxious about the *consequences* of dying. One says death is a solemn thing, owns himself unprepared to die; and adds, God knows we are all too forgetful of it. He then resolves to repent and reform, and thinks himself a better man than thousands, for his good thoughts and words about death, and especially for his good resolutions, which, perhaps, he never performs, nor even fixes the *time* when he intends to *attempt* to fulfil them. The *afflicted* hear of another's death, and declare, that if it shall please God to restore them to health, they will improve their days in God's service, and in preparing for another world; and, by fixing a time of *health* for repentance and conversion, they lose all their opportunities of seeking God in the affliction, which may prove their last. Deceived creatures! they forget that in a time of health they deferred repentance to a sick or dying bed; and now dying, they feel no disposition or power to repent; no satisfaction in a sick-bed repentance, and therefore propose repenting in health, which may never return. *Hear* all these vain excuses, false reasonings, groundless hopes, and hypocritical resolutions. Hear them, O man! remember that no affliction, however painful; no objects, however awful and interesting; no disease, however dangerous; no prospects, however tremendous, can produce *one* useful sensation in the mind, without God's spirit working by them. No! they deceive, flatter, harden, and ruin sinners, unless that blessed spirit operates with and by such rousing circumstances. These facts show the propriety of David's prayer. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." To number our days, is "to take a right account of them," so as to answer their *end* and *design*. To act with a view to the *period* of them, and to secure the best *consequences* to ourselves. To answer the *end* of life; to be ready to *part* with life; to prepare for a nobler and more perfect life; this David would do: but could not without divine teaching. So *teach* us, he cried, conscious of his own weakness, and the need of a gracious influence from Heaven to impress and move the heart savingly. The death of mankind has a voice of *instruction* to the living. It proclaims man a *sinner*. It declares him an offender

against his Maker, in such a manner as to have *forfeited his life.* Death is an object of *dread* to man; he views it as an *enemy*, and *abhors* it. He views it as a *penalty*, or the deserved punishment of sin, and tries all methods to prevent it. Now, if man was *created* in such a condition, he was *imperfect;* and if God made him so originally, how is man the subject of blame and punishment, for what neither he, nor his first parents, could avoid? No; this is not the case. Man is *fallen* from God! from his *duty*, and his *happiness.* He *feels* himself an offender, and views death as a proof of it. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Death, then, loudly proclaims the *fall*, that is, the *offence* of man. Its language is, man is fallen! is fallen! And do men receive this evidence of their sinful and condemned state? Far from it. They suppose that death is a debt to *nature:* but death is against nature. Nature shuns it—dreads it. It is a debt to *justice*, whose sentence is, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou *return.*" The *natural union* between the soul and the body is *dissolved* in consequence of this sentence.

Would a God of *justice* punish an *innocent* creature? Would a *good* God suffer the *fears* of death to reign in a creature's mind through a number of years, and then bring all his fears upon him, if he were perfect in his love and obedience? Far be it from God, whose goodness and justice always harmonize, to do after *this* manner. No: man received his life from God, and received every blessing to make that life *happy*, and a *law* to *regulate* his life, according to the will of his Maker. This was the *end* of his life, to enjoy and obey God; an end worthy of God to appoint, and of man to pursue. Man *disobeyed* this law, and began to live for *himself*, as his own lord, and his own end. This was changing the *end* of his creation, and *forfeiting* the life he had abused. He *knew* this was the consequence of disobedience. He took the *forbidden* fruit; his existence was lost; he instantly became *wretched* when he became *sinful*, and liable to *death*, that is, the loss of his existence in this world.

Death not only proclaims the fall of man, but also the dreadful evil of SIN. What an evil must that be, which takes man from all the enjoyments of the only state of existence he experimentally knows, and turns him out of the world!—which separates his soul from his body, and forces him into another state of life, quite unknown! How *deceived* is man in his estimate of sin. See, see! guilty mortal, what God thinks of thy sin, by his *action*, in depriving thee of life. "Fools make a mock at sin;" but God makes a mock at fools, by forcing them to *feel* that evil in sin, which they are unwilling to *own*. But, my fellow-creature, thou must *die;* and if so, thou art a *sinner*, for death is the *consequence* of sin. Is death an evil? A great evil? An evil which you dread and take pains to avoid? Then, surely, *sin*, which is the *cause* of death, is an

evil too. Death is the *fruit* of sin. If the fruit is evil, the *root* must be so. And does not this disposition to hate death, more than sin, prove that fallen man is more concerned about *himself* than God? And that he values his own *ease* more than God's *glory*? It arises from his *pride*, which induces him to think his sin little, and his punishment great.

Death shows the folly of an excessive *love* and *fear* of the creature. Fond creature, the object you love so dearly, and fancy unknown pleasure in its enjoyment, may be dead to-morrow, and must be dead *soon!* Why set thy affections on things below, and love, almost to distraction, a creature so frail, so fading as man? See, yonder young man looking into the grave—where lies the object of his warmest love. He weeps. He wipes his eyes. He fetches a deep sigh, and taking a farewell look, departs inconsolable. Death did not pity him, nor spare his beloved. O man! seek a deathless object for thy supreme regard, and do not suppose infinite excellence in finite creatures; lest death, to you, or to them, should convince you of your folly. That child, in whom your "life is bound;"—that wife or husband whom you love so greatly; that friend, without whom you cannot relish life, may leave you before the sun sets or rises again. Every favourite object, death may remove. He loudly cries "set your affections on *things above*, and not on things on the earth." You may leave them. Yes, the favourite place, business, or scheme, which you now contemplate with pleasure, and pursue with diligence;—the dear friend, relative, fellow-christian you so much (perhaps too much) value, you may be called to *leave*, in less than a day, without so much as saying, farewell. Too strong an attachment to any thing "under the sun," sharpens the sting of death. Painful moment! which tears a man from the object, in which his heart centres. The folly of the *fear* of man, is equally plain, in the death of man. Trembling creature! the man who now slanders your person, deprives you of peace, hinders you of business, persecutes you for religion, threatens your character, hurts your usefulness;—that vain, boasting, threatening mortal, may be the victim of death, and the inhabitant of the grave before another week is gone. "Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a *man*—that shall *die*?"

Death exposes the folly of *covetousness;* a disposition which, while it thirsts for more, robs a man of the enjoyment of what he has. Why such restless desires? Why such ceaseless and anxious endeavour? Why neglect thy *soul*, to obtain money which thou shalt never want, for when thou diest "thou shalt carry NOTHING away with thee." Grasping creature, "this night, thy soul may be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Think, wretched man, think! If you obtain your wish, you will not enjoy more; but unite your heart more to this world, and render death more terrible. Death exposes the

folly of *pride*. The pride of beauty, birth, strength, wealth, learning, how unbecoming the man or woman, who must very shortly appear a poor, unamiable, degraded, helpless, perishing corpse. Proud man; the worm is thy brother, the earth is thy original, and thy house "the grave, is ready for thee."

Ambition! how dost thou appear in death? Death strips the ambitious man of his honourable place; discharges him from his office; transfers his power to another, and snatching him from a number of flatterers, compels him to hear and feel the *truth* of his own character, and the danger of his own condition.

Death exhibits the vanity of all *earthly distinctions*, and the folly of those who value them too much. Distinguished mortal, what will thy honours, wealth, reputation, friends or talents, avail thee in thy conflict with death? Can they *bribe*, or *conquer* him? Will they not increase the horrors of "the king of terrors," by rending thee from them all, and levelling thy condition with that of the poorest, and meanest? Your beloved distinctions are unknown *beyond* death. In Hell, they are distinguished by sin and misery; in heaven, by holiness and happiness; but your delights will die with you.

And thou *poor* man, why discontented with thy lot? Thou hast fewer snares, no flatterers, few diseases, less reason to love the world; and more reason to *resign* it. Be contented with thy lot. Improve thy condition, in prayer and gratitude; in faith and obedience; in industry and frugality; and thou wilt never repent that thou wast poor in this world, neither when you are leaving it, nor when you have left it. But many a rich man, in dying moments, will wish he had been poor, and his hell will be spent in recollecting, that "he in his life-time received his good things," to no good purpose, but to many bad ones. Man's averseness to death, makes him defer the *thoughts* of it, until he is *compelled* to think of it. He *would* not die; and he thinks he *shall not* die very soon. He always keeps death at a *distance* in his own thoughts, however *near* it may be in *reality*. Such a person cannot be happy: he has always something to *fear*, and fear always "torments." How much better to view death very near, when, in reality, it is some years' distance from us.

No. CLI.—Liberty of Soul.

How few, comparatively speaking, enjoy, in any eminent degree, the liberty of soul, which the primitive Christians possessed! The highest attainments of thousands, apparently upright Christians, are doubts and fears, and complaints of the sadness of their general frame of mind. Their low hopes, cold affections, and wavering faith, manifest at best but a small share of the spirit's influences. How few are strong in the faith, giving glory to God. How many

lips are closed in public service, which would show forth God's praise, if the spirit enlarged their hearts? How vain and sinful the conversation of most professors! What can these things spring from? They are not the fruits of the Holy Spirit: but do they not prove his absence from such souls? If faith is feeble, the desires after God, few and faint, the conversation will be cold and carnal, the thoughts and affections awfully estranged from God, and the prayers of the closet will bear a sad likeness to the frame of the soul. O Christian, O Christian, if this is thy state, what right hast thou to the *title* of Christian? Especially, if this frame is not merely occasional and short, but *habitual*; if thou art *easy* in this frame, and dost not double thy diligence in the means of grace, thirst more ardently, and pray with more importunity for the Holy Spirit. The sincerity of our desires after God will be followed by repeated and animated requests to him. Forget not, that Christ and the Bible are unknown and unenjoyed, without the Spirit of grace. Dost thou prize his influences? Does thy gracious temper, do thy solemn cries to God, prove this? O thou doubting, fearful, wavering, complaining soul; if thou didst but know more of the glory, grace, and operations of the spirit of wisdom, faith, and comfort, many of the days of thy mourning would be prevented. *Value* the Spirit—think of the Spirit—read of the Spirit—talk of the Spirit—reverence and honour the Spirit—pray for the Spirit—plead and wait for the Spirit—hope for and expect the Spirit—sigh, mourn, wrestle, agonise for the Spirit, until upon thy soul he is "poured from on high."

No. CLII.—A Christian's Joy.

If Christ is the *object* of a Christian's joy, at *any* time, why not at *all* times? The *fact* is plain, that no believers *always* rejoice in the Lord; and *few* rejoice in him *generally*. The cause must be sought in the *subject* of this joy—the Christian himself; not in Christ, whose person, character, love and offices are the *same*. *He* is immutably the *same* to the believer to-day, and for ever; and a believer's *interest* in Christ is invariable. There is no moment when he is not in union with and loved by the Redeemer. No outward condition, no inward conflicts, affect his relation to Christ. Death, which dissolves his connexion with the world, confirms his connexion with "the Lord of Glory." Beside, a believer's prospects grow *richer* as he grows older. He contemplates the glories of the Redeemer, experiences his love, power, and care, and expects fullness of joy above. The believer has no ground of joy, unconnected with *his salvation*, and *every* thing relating to his salvation, is inseparably connected with *Christ*. Salvation includes *numerous* springs of joy, which are called "Wells of Salvation." These wells are

fed by Christ. Every consideration of him, in faith, promotes the believer's *salvation*. The believer's *election* is in Christ; his pardon, righteousnes, and holiness are in him. Salvation understood in its *source, received* in its *perfection* and *freeness*, produces *joy* in Christ as the *author* of it, in all its parts. This joy is produced by believing the Scripture testimony of Jesus and his work. Receiving the spirit as the fruit of Christ's intercession, he administers spiritual *might*, a disposition to a diligent activity in the means of grace. "He *draws* water with joy," from objects of revealed truth. This implies reading, meditation, hearing, prayer, and conversation. Drawing water is not done by a lazy wish nor an idle endeavour, but by *vigorous application*. This frame is very *important* to the Christian. When Christ and his salvation is his joy, and he "joys in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," this frame is pleasant and animating. "The joy of the Lord is his *strength*;" and whilst exercising it, trials are patiently endured, temptations are resisted, corruptions are conquered, death is disarmed, and Heaven is endeared. The great hindrances of this happy temper are,—a disbelief of the special favour and special providence of God; judging of one's state and condition by unscriptural marks of a Christian; an ungoverned temper; a legal frame which withdraws the mind from Christ, and the entire freeness of his salvation; some sin favoured; or, a spirit of indolence. These are enemies to divine joy, and lead to a life of *sense*, of *anxiety*, of fears, doubts, and sin.

Joy in God is productive of praise to God. He is the *object* of a believer's joy in all his divine persons, relations, titles, perfections, engagements, and works. The more this is experienced, the more *grateful* the soul will feel; because God is the *author*, as well as the object of joy. The soul cannot perceive him, believe him, enjoy him, or praise him, but through a divine influence. And the more *happy* a soul is in God, the less *satisfied* will it be in its most elevated strains of praise. Because we most clearly *discern* his divine glories, when we most *delight* ourselves in him. And the clearer view, and more powerful enjoyment a soul has of God, the more it is affected with the greatness of the *favour* done it. This makes the soul strive the more to glorify God in Christ, and leaves it humbled and happy, holy and grateful, under a consciousness of its own *unworthiness* and *inability* to exalt the Lord.

There are various ways of praising God; but divine joy is not inconsistent with any of them, in which it is a Christian's duty to be found. Spiritual joy will always promote, but never hinder divine praise. But *how* is this heavenly work to be carried on? I answer: This must be determined by *revelation*. The word *praise* signifies *confession*; and this word will apply in *any* of the passages where it occurs; but the word *praise* will not, as in Prov. xxviii. 13; Psalm li. 3; xxxii. 5; Josh. vii. 19, &c. "Whoso offereth *confession* glorifieth God." Let any one consider the last verse of the fiftieth

Psalm in connexion with the foregoing, and ask himself if the word *praise* means any thing in that connexion. The word praise will apply in *many* cases, but not in some. The word confession or acknowledgment, will apply in *all* the passages where the original word *judah* occurs. Whoso offereth a confession,—of his sins with penitence, of his mercies with gratitude, and of the divine excellences with adoration, glorifies God. Thus *prayer* glorifies God, because it is an acknowledgment of his *sufficiency*, his *grace*, his *faithfulness*, and *wisdom*. Suppose a believer embarrassed in his circumstances, he seeks divine direction. "Lord, my way is dark: I wish to know my duty, and discharge it, but have neither light nor strength. Make my way plain before me. This prayer implies a confession, that God is the God of *knowledge*, of power, of goodness, of wisdom, and truth. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Prov. iii. 6. To ask for mercy in faith, is a *confession* of the guilt and ruin of the soul, the atonement of Christ, and the grace of God. To ask for the Holy Spirit in faith, is a confession of the efficacy of Christ's intercession, through which it is given.

So *conversation*, of a spiritual nature, is a confession and recommendation of God, and his truth. A habit of talking of God, is an acknowledgment that the soul knows no object of equal excellence; no subject of equal importance. So *singing* in faith, is glorifying God, and answers to the original word, which signifies to "thrust forth," "to hold forth." So to thrust forth a confession of the divine glories, works, or mercies, in a song. "With my song will I confess him," Ps. xxviii. 7. And what are the praises of Heaven, but confession of the divine persons, relations, titles, perfections, works, and glory? This confession is, no doubt, thrust forth with reverence, affection, zeal, and gratitude, becoming the object, the subject, and the place! Thus, believers should attempt to confess God, in one way and another, seven, that is many, times a-day; and act consistently with their confession. "Confession is *comely* for the *upright*," and for them *only*. Is it comely for a person to confess the *wisdom* of God, and trust his *own*? to confess Christ as a Saviour, and confide in his own righteousness? to confess God's holiness, truth, and faithfulness, and live in the practice of lying, dishonesty, and impurity? to confess the excellence of God, and be lukewarm towards him? the authority of Christ, and disobey him? Is this uprightness? Is not such conduct a confession of our *hypocrisy*, rather than praise? This view of the subject should comfort weak and distressed believers, who are fearful that they never praise God, because they never rise to that elevated devotion which they behold in others! Fearful soul; if thou didst but observe, that every act of faith is an act of praise, thou wouldest not so wrong thyself. Dost thou not confess thy sin with shame, pain, grief, and hatred? What is this but a confession of the goodness of God's law, the

holiness of his nature, and thy need of his son as thy ransom? This is glorifying God. Dost not thou call on his name for mercy, in dependence on the Redeemer? This is praise, or a confession of his grace, salvation, justice, and power. Do not think, that all acceptable praise consists in some inexplicable elevations of mind, but attend to plain Scripture. Remember that preaching, praying, reading, hearing, conversing, singing, and acting in *faith*, is confessing, that is, praising God. This will prove thee a real *Jew*, a *confessor* of the true God.

Prayer also is a most solemn confession of an immortal soul to God. God is the object to be thought of and spoken to. But, alas! alas! if this is praying, many, very many addresses, called prayers are no such things. When any person praying in his family, or in a prayer-meeting, intends to *teach* the persons present, rather than *prevail with God*, how entirely does he mistake the *nature* of prayer! It shows he has less faith in the promise he may plead, than in his own ability. Comparatively speaking, in the social or family circle, there is but little prayer. One attends more to the pleasing of his hearers by his language, or to teach them by his ideas, than to wrestle with God. Another intends his address, more as a comfort or reproof to some present, than a request to God. I do not say that our language, or the edification of others, should be neglected: but our *concern* in prayer is immediately with the present but invisible God. And if we try more to please ourselves or preach to men, than pray to God, we shall lose much time, and labour, and comfort, whilst we are obliged to bear the mortifying disappointment of not receiving an answer to prayers which were never addressed to God, but to men! How vain and inconsistent must that creature be, who can trust more to his own powers in prayer, than to the exercise of divine power in answer to his prayers!

No. CLIII.—Spiritual Conversation.

How greatly to be lamented is the scarcity of spiritual conversation. If but half-a-dozen christians meet together, and one of them begins on subjects divine and spiritual, perhaps he may gain attention for a few minutes; then, by pairs, a spirit of tattling begins: and if two or three in the company maintain, with profit, the consideration of better things, the rest, too generally, keep up their useless tales, and sometimes tincture the *whole* company with the *novelty* of their unprofitable subjects. Ah! imperfect state, that our thoughts, our converse, our enjoyments, are so broken, so rare, so transient. When will christians feel, think, speak, and act like christians? When shall the effects of the divine Spirit be more *visible*. O! thou delightful place, called Heaven; the im-

perfection of society here, makes me think of thee, and thy inhabitants. *Here*, my poor soul is grieved, hindered, and discouraged; *there*, I hope to meet with kindred souls, who feelingly communicate what each enjoys, without imperfection, without weariness, and without end.

No. CLIV.—The Spirit.

The *necessity* of the Holy Spirit's agency on the mind of a believer, is manifest, not merely in the support requisite under outward trials of inward weight, but even under the most *trivial* concerns of life. How deeply is the spirit agitated, vexed, and wounded by small, and sometimes, insignificant circumstances! What various passions shall be alternately moved by an occurrence, which, at first sight, hardly appeared noticeable! What fear, foreboding, and despondency reign over the mind! or what anger, revenge, and contempt of others will pollute the thoughts, inflame the affections, and disturb the soul! A surmise, a mere suspicion, however groundless, shall seem *certain*, and torture the soul with fearful consequences, which exist only in the disturbed imagination. Helpless creature! that *one thought* should be capable of rendering the spirit so miserable, for a season, as to prevent all pleasure, to spoil the enjoyment of every blessing of time and eternity; the business of life shall be a burden, the pleasures of life tasteless, the necessaries of life without refreshment, and "wearisome nights shall be appointed to thee."

But how few consider what such trifling talk proclaims! Can any one be persuaded that such persons are spiritual, when *alone*, who are so carnal in *company*? Does not a spiritual person suspect their love of Christ, their fellowship with God, and their attention to the word of God, when their conversation is so barren of divine subjects? If "out of abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," are not our words, the signs of the *ideas* and *thoughts* which fill the heart? Would we have persons be so inconsistent, as to believe our hearts are better than what comes from them? What! does the *root* bear no resemblance to the fruit? Is not the *tree* known by its *fruit*? are not the thoughts, the sentiments, the favourite subjects, the reigning disposition known by the *conversation*? What then can any man think of his state and frame of mind, when it produces almost nothing but carnal, trifling thoughts, words, and affections?

How signal are the honours which God puts upon spiritual conversation! Many have been solidly comforted, richly instructed, seasonably warned, and effectually roused, by conversation which was spiritual in its nature and design. Many owe their conversion to it as the means. Why then do we hear so little of it? Why is it in such small repute among Christians? If a Christian acts in character, he "fears God above many." His conversation will be-

come the Gospel; and if it does, let him not fear that "all men will speak well of him." No! an ungodly world will abhor him and misrepresent his character, and "watch for his halting." The reproofs of his tongue and holy conduct, will exasperate and shame, torment and confound them. Luke-warm Christians will endeavour to find out something exceptionable in his practice or sentiments. Their language will be; "Ah, he is a good man, but too sanguine." Or, "he has a warm heart, he means well; but his heart is better than his head." They will often impute his spiritual and faithful conversation to *legality*, or a disposition to trust in his own obedience for justification. "Poor thing!" an orthodox hypocrite will exclaim, "he is very zealous; but it is a good thing to exercise 'zeal according to knowledge;' I fear there is a great deal of *Arminianism* about him." Thus, instead of following the example, which their judgment must approve; they censure, as their cold affections and carnal inclinations lead them. But, how often conscience speaks a language altogether different *to them*, from what they speak *to others*. How often does their "heart smite them," whilst their tongue smites others. I think I hear conscience speaking within them thus: 'thou poor unhappy creature! is not thy temper and conduct more tinctured with Antinomianism; or a disregard to known duties, than the man thou condemnest is with Arminianism? If thou hast the greatest gifts, thou art conscious that he has the greatest grace. Does it not become thee to add *zeal* to thy knowledge, as much as thy brother, to have knowledge with his zeal? Censorious man! The truth is, thou art jealous of thy brother, and enviest him his peace, his reputation and his usefulness. You cannot bear to hear his grace more admired than thy gifts and orthodoxy. You are afraid some will draw a comparison between thy talents, and his usefulness! thy gifts and his grace; thy description of a Christian, and his life; between thy sentiments and his practice; thy sound creed, clear head and carnal mind, with his holy temper, warm heart, and spiritual walk;—these are the thoughts which torture thy breast; *this* is a jealousy more cruel than the grave. No longer wish to level thy faithful brother with thyself in cold formality; but study to *rise* to his fidelity and zeal. Instead of censure, speak the language of thy conscience, and as thy judgment approves, let thy tongue do the same. Point out his excellences to others for their imitation, rather than create faults for them to blame. Follow his steps, and imbibe his spirit *yourself*, that you may share his happiness instead of increasing your own misery. If he is happy in the love of God, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Communion of the Holy Ghost, and "holds his peace—the *stones* will cry out!" Yea, a Christian indeed, may be left to censure his brother, for reproving sin with courage, or introducing a subject of religion into some company. He may say, such forwardness *disgusts*, rather than pleases; and hardens, in-

stead of profiting the hearers. But, surely, the ready way to harden the ungodly in their sins, is, for Christians to comply with their wishes, to imitate their conduct and spirit, and talk as they do. This will induce them to think religion all a *farce*; they seeing no difference between themselves and those who know better and profess more than they do. Such a conduct is injurious to the *zealous* Christian; for it makes the ungodly hate him the *more* for his spirituality. They will say—"what a stiff, precise hypocrite he is; he is talking about religion. What! does he think religion consists in talking about it? I was in the company of Mr. —— the other day, and he said nothing about religion; at least, nothing but what any person would like; and I am sure he is a sober, good sort of a man." Thus a professor may obtain the applause of carnal men; "men of corrupt minds," and promote a spirit of enmity against, and persecution of, his more zealous brethren.

There are various *evils* attending the neglect of this duty. In relation to *God* it is ungrateful, and a contempt of his authority. Many Christians have omitted it, until they have found but small remorse for the omission. They have heard it enforced from the pulpit, with divine authority; the preacher trusting more to his own abilities, than the word and spirit of God. And they have seen it disregarded by Christians in general, until they think little of the guilt of neglecting it. Thus the example of a formal Christian, has more influence upon the heart, than the will of God and the example of Christ, and a few of his people who "fear God above many."

It is one way in which we should confess Christ before men; "both good and bad men; and promote his cause in the world," "contending for the faith, once delivered to the saints," and being "valiant for the truth upon earth." Carnal men often support the form of religion by their presence in public assemblies, and by contributing money for that end. And there is nothing which more supports their false hope; but Christians, indeed, should "do *more* than others," as they profess more, receive more, and expect more.

A gift for spiritual conversation is one of the most useful among Christians, and particularly becoming in ministers. And they need divine wisdom to manage this duty; for the variety of cases, subjects, and tastes, which a minister meets, must be discerned and improved if he would be useful. To recommend our conversation, it should personally interest those we converse with. And this remark observed, we should find a *variety* of edifying subjects which would enrich our minds and our sermons, while it profited our hearers more extensively. If a good man has a taste for politics, may not a minister gladly embrace the opportunity of remarking what the *Scriptures* say on the subject? The conduct of princes and their ministers, interests every subject in the kingdom less or more; and is inseparably connected with the doctrine of providence. And shall we stupidly neglect the operations of Providence in our own

country and time, while we read with eagerness the history of foreign countries and past times? Our prayers and praises for our king, country, and fellow-subjects, must be regulated by circumstances: but these must be first *known*. For my own part, I think it manifests a contracted mind, or a stupid, ungrateful one, to be entirely silent upon these things. It often springs from an affected spirituality. What are politics?—The science of government. Am I not a man? a Christian? And can I be indifferent who are my governors or how they govern? Am I a social being? And can I be indifferent to the miseries and happiness of my fellows? The French revolution, for instance, engages the attention of all Europe. And should *Christians* be excepted? What Christian soul can reflect on the present situation of France without concern, without indignation, without prayer and praise? Our talk on this subject should be *modest*. We have no right to pass rash and heavy censure upon kings or their ministers. The motives of their conduct are not always published, and very seldom known.

Let our conversation be *instructive* and *spiritual*, discovering something of God's conduct towards us, or our conduct towards him; and the harmony of the words and works of God. Let the mind be guarded against extremes, and always make conversation on politics lead to nobler themes. Let us aim to point out the evil of sin with seriousness of soul—this may humble;—the mercies of a particular providence—this will excite gratitude;—and our evident duties—this will quicken our activity in obedience. Our best qualification will be a good acquaintance with the Scriptures, an humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, and fervent prayer for direction and success. It is a minister's disgrace to be ignorant of what his *Bible* says upon such subjects. Many a good man would be hurt, and think a minister ignorant, or illnatured, or suspicious, if he were to disregard his observation upon politics; but if he improved it, he might be pleased that a remark of his was the occasion of useful conversation: besides, it avoids disgust, and insures his esteem by respecting his remarks. Who likes to be slighted?

In conversing on political subjects, a Christian should regard "edification." This end kept in view, will regulate his remarks on the subject, and avoid a cavilling party spirit. If we forget that we are *Christians*, we shall find our minds injured by this subject, or indeed by any other. May not a believer talk spiritually on carnal things, as many talk carnally on spiritual things? May he not show what relation events bear to Christ? In what manner they display his Christian government and designs? Must it be forgotten, that "all power in heaven and earth is committed to him; and that the government of the world, as well as the church, is upon his shoulder?—Surely, not. "The *Lord's* voice crieth to the city;" shall the men of wisdom not hear his name?—That is, his nature, perfection, and will. If it is the voice of THE LORD to a *city*, shall

the inhabitants of that city not "see the rod and him who appoints it?" If they see it, must they be silent, and not point it out to others, and improve it themselves?

Conversation on religious subjects, may be carried on without spirituality of thought, affection, or aim. And when this duty is attended to with levity and indifference, it is worse than the neglect of it. And the more a man talks upon religious subjects without *acting* well, the more injury he does to the Gospel. And if he affects great humility, spirituality, and enjoyment of God, it is still worse. Yet it is a sad truth, that many professors who are covetous, unjust, and worldly-minded, talk so confidently of their own salvation, and so largely and frequently upon the love of God, that an upright Christian must often be grieved, a weak Christian often put out of countenance, and an unbeliever disgusted. But such a man will always be despised, both by the church and the world. "The prating fool shall fall," into contempt and ruin. Some believe that God loves them, and strengthen this belief by their deceitful self-love, which leads them to form a good opinion of their own views and condition. A false joy and the delusion of the devil strengthen their assurance. Sin does not break their peace. If Providence smiles on them, it is taken as a distinguishing mark of his love to them; and all the promises are considered as made to them. These persons are very suspicious of others, unless they evidence a good opinion of their singular piety. Another, with a good memory, may retail stories in such numbers, and relate them in such various companies, that many may hear with attention, and suppose with the self-admiring prater, that he is wonderfully spiritual. When, at the market, he lies, cheats, and over-reaches for gain; at home he is proud and tyrannical to his domestics. Abroad, seeks applause by acting a character he does not sustain. Nearly the whole of some persons' conversation consists in observations upon ministers of the Gospel. They can give a history of many ministers: half of which they *heard say*, and, therefore, it is *uncertain*—the other half is often entirely *false*. Yet, to seem acquainted with ministers, to talk much about them, to sit in judgment upon their characters and sermons, is a *fine set-off* to some Christians, male and female.

No. CLV. Indecision.

One of the greatest inconsistencies in the world, is, a Christian halting between God and the world; conscience and affections.—Real religion will make a man happy, if he has enough of it: but if a person cleaves to God *partially*; halts—feels undetermined in his will and unsettled in his affections; he is perpetually at war with himself, and is much more miserable than the man of no profession. Lukewarmness in religion, is as painful, as it is criminal. The little such a man knows of God, mars his enjoyment of the world; and his

indifference excludes the enjoyment of God. In these cold days, are not most Christians unhappy? Are not their doubts and fears and complaints, grievous evidences of the fact? To what is it owing? In some measure to this—their "hearts are *divided*." They would be happy in God, whilst they seek him with indifference, and the world with eagerness. They substitute mere complaints of their barrenness, for an earnest application to God, and an humble walk with him. They pray to God, in their closets, morning and evening; and then forget him from morning to evening. They read little of the Bible, and much of human authors. They are more concerned to find the marks of a Christian in books, than to *act* the Christian in temper and practice. Their profession makes them friends to each other; but their carnality prevents mutual service to each other. They hear all the tales of the day, and relate all they hear. In their regular visits, they are mere gossips. Their experience is so poor, that to mention any part of it, would show the nakedness of the land, or render their characters suspicious. And if any thing of the kind is named, it will amount to this, that they are self-condemned, suspicious of their own sincerity, and at an entire stand.

Upon such christians, the tears, prayers and labours of ministers are nearly lost. They hear much, and instead of improving the sermons to profit themselves, they content themselves in praising or censuring the minister. With cold-hearted Christians, ministers are more talked of than their Master;—as if they preached *themselves*, not Christ Jesus the Lord! And if *experience* is the subject of conversation, to avoid disclosing their own leanness, they talk of the experience of *past years*, and convince you that they do not press forward to the mark. They talk of their first-love, *merely;* for by their own account, they have enjoyed but little since their conversion. They live upon past experience, not on the Son of God.—Such conversions, are the ruin of many souls, who, not finding love to God at *present*, look back, and trust in a first-love, which might be no more than imagination, warmed by some awful or delightful truths; a *natural* knowledge of which, might stir their *natural* affections and leave them unrenewed; might kindle joy, arising from a conceit that their strange sensations were the fruit of God's Spirit, and lead them to date their conversion from that hour, without any after-evidence of it. Such a delusion is often confirmed by a weak minister, or by partial Christians, who soon lead the young sinner to believe himself a saint indeed, and to form a better opinion of himself than before, which is all the fruit of such conversions. If his confidence abates, through afflictions, or a searching sermon, he is upheld in his dream by being assured, that all Christians who lose their first-love, are liable to doubts and fears; yea, and that they rather prove him sincere than otherwise. This reconciles him to his state and frame; and seeing others of long standing, whose religion

is little else than fears and complaints, he is not over anxious to get deliverance from his fears, because every time he mentions them, he hears the same from others, whom *he* thinks better Christians than himself; and he rests more on their judgment concerning himself than upon his own. If at any time he lose his fears, it is by believing himself a real Christian, and not by believing in Jesus Christ. The preaching of some minister, and the conversation of some Christians may draw such characters, and mention such experience, as standards, that, however contrary to Scripture, they may be taken as genuine. Thus comparing himself with the standard proposed, he finds himself a real believer, and for a time, loses his fears. But such a conduct rather smothers than removes guilt. Fears and doubts will return, and reign, whilst such a "lie is in their right hand," in their *right* hand: that is—*used* to deceive, and strongly held.

No. CLVI—.Grace at Meals.

Many, who call themselves the followers of Christ, neglect to glorify him at their *meals*: among these there is a difference. Some neglect it *totally*, and some *partially*; the latter will use a form at *dinner*, but with no *other* meal. This obtains among *fashionable* christians; but on what solid reasons I could never learn. If such persons disapprove of the thing, why pretend to use it at all? But if their judgment *approve* it, why neglect it three meals out of four, by asking a blessing only upon one meal in the day? or if they use it at dinner and supper, why not at breakfast and tea?

Do you wish for God's blessing upon what you eat and drink? If you do not expect it upon your *dinner* without asking for it, why not ask for it upon your *tea*, *morning* and *afternoon*? What reason have you to expect the blessing without asking for it? If tea, and what you eat with it are, in your apprehension, too insignificant for a solemn petition to attend the reception of them, why receive them with as much regularity, constancy, and pleasure, as a dinner? Do you plead, that it appears *formal* and over-righteous to ask a blessing upon food so often in the day? I ask, to *whom* does it appear formal? surely to none but mere formalists in religion. Not to the person who feels a growing concern for his eternal interests! not to the man whose meat and drink is to do the will of his heavenly father; not to the man who wishes his meals to be mediums of communion with God, and to eat his bread with singleness and gladness of heart. No! he wishes his food to be seasoned with a sense of the divine favour; and not only to *feel*, but to *express* a grateful sense of his mercies. He knows the command is, "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you." Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." But can a christian, who is unthankful, eat

and drink to the glory of God? and is it not his duty to *manifest* his gratitude to others, for an *example?* Should not his light *shine before men*, that *they*, seeing *this* good work, might glorify their Father, who is in Heaven?" "Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." If we are commanded "to stir up the gift that is in us," and forbidden to "quench the spirit," should we not, instead of cooling the devout frame of others, by our lukewarm conduct, rather stir up their graces by our example? "Whatsoever things are lovely, *think* on these things." What reason can be assigned against this practice? Perhaps you will say, you can exercise grateful thoughts without expressing them? True; but then why express them at *any other* meal? Why not confine your grateful thoughts *always*? or if you have them, why not kindle such in colder hearts by expressing them? What! *ashamed* to neglect it totally, for fear of having your piety suspected; and yet ashamed to use it uniformly, lest you should be thought a saint? Is it *custom* or *fashion* which *regulates*, or rather *disorders*, this duty? or, are you afraid, that to begin and end your tea with God, would make you too serious afterwards to enjoy slander, jest, and idle tales? Would not a serious address to God, before tea, have a tendency to *prevent* such conduct? and lead every person to be silent, or speak to purpose? Alas! alas! that a duty so becoming a christian, so easily performed, and so profitable to others, should want enforcing upon any who profess to believe in the redemption of Christ!

It is too true, that many of those who esteem it their duty to be found in this exercise at all their meals, too often dwindle into mere formality in it. This is no more an objection to the duty itself, than the formal prayer of a hypocrite, to the sincere petitions of a christian indeed; or than the luxury of some men is to the temperate use of food in others. The slovenly manner in which some perform this duty, who are too lazy and indifferent to rise from their seats for a few minutes, but lean on the table as if going to sleep, is lamentable. Indeed, those who are masters of families, but especially ministers of the gospel, contribute greatly to this, by the short, cold, and hasty manner of performing the duty. If *they* were in earnest, those at the table with them might be so too, and some of them would be ashamed to *appear* otherwise. Christian! as you should not be slothful in *business*, surely you should be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

No. CLVII.—Spiritual Weakness.

The weakness of the human mind is fully evident in one striking instance; namely, the power which *sense* has over it; and that not only over unconverted men, but believers in Christ, whose judgments

are convinced of the *evil* of the reign of sense. Yet, feeble spirit! not all thy knowledge; not all thy past experience, painful or consolatory; not all thy present advantages, however great, if unassisted by grace divine, can conquer the least temptation, wash the least stain from the imagination, or brush from the mind one vain thought, if it has the interest of *sense* to back it. In vain he repels it; because he repels it feebly and with only *half* a resolution against it. It returns, is harboured, sent away, and welcomed again, until the growing impression on the affections leads captive reason, experience, every faculty of the mind, and every member of the body. Let reason address his hope with the prospect of eternal glory, and his fear with eternal torment: place before him his present fears as evidences he is going wrong, and show him from Scripture threatenings the *awful losses* in mental pleasure he is likely to sustain; let reason point out to him an afflicted body and deserted soul; a family smarting for his sins, and trade waxing poor; yea, should a blaspheming world, and the cause of God suffering be the probable consequences of his fall, still—wonderful weakness and folly! still he proceeds, and *will* proceed, unless a supernatural power enlighten his mind with rays of revealed truth, and pour energy into his feeble soul, giving him the "Spirit's might in the inner man." If he earnestly *desire* and zealously *strive* to conquer sin and sense, even then, if God suspends the desired aid, "he can *do* nothing." But even an *attempt* to conquer sense, or to *desire* a victory over it, is no more in the power of a believer, than to save his own soul. When we are not "strong in the Lord," we are as really without strength, as the ungodly themselves.

"In my *flesh* dwelleth no good thing:" this is the confession of every christian. This flesh includes a depravity of *mind*, which is affected by the *flesh;* and, in turn, the mind affects the flesh. Mysterious union of soul and body! and painful effects of their fall! Happy body that is governed by the mind; the mind itself being governed by the Spirit of Christ!

No. CLVIII.—Communion of Saints.

The Communion of Saints, in this world, is extremely imperfect. It is so confined, partial, and interrupted as to lead one, at some moments, to question its existence. Where we expect it most, it is often most distant; and where we least think to find it, we are happily surprised and profited by it. And even in a little society, how limited is their communion; I mean, in the real enjoyment of God and each other. At one time half a dozen Christians shall maintain a warm affection to each other, and their spiritual converse shall mutually benefit each other; but soon, by some means or other, a shyness commences. They suspect, shun, and too often misre-

present each other. Then they obtain other bosom friends, and walk with them in love and confidence for a time. But sin and Satan make a breach where they suspect no weakness, and separate them in heart. Thus, by turns, they are the friends and foes of all the society. Ignorance and pride, self-love and jealousy, lead us astray. We look for much respect from our fellow Christians, because, we think, we *deserve* much; and for the same reason—we *pay* little. And if they love us cordially, a small incident will awaken our suspicion; and we *rashly* conclude they are very cool. Poor creatures! may our variableness prevent excessive attachment to the creature, and endear an unchangeable God. *We* are imperfect; and others have much to bear from *us*. *They* are imperfect; and we have much to bear from *them*. Happy world! where we shall see in each other, nothing we dislike, but every thing lovely and beloved.

No. CLIX.—Dominion of Sense.

That principle of sense, which reigns in all bad men, and lives in all good men, is one of the most faithful sources of sin, guilt, and pain in the world. A life of *sense*, and a life of *faith*, are directly opposite to each other in their nature and tendency. A life of sense clouds the understanding, by bringing *false reports* of things to it, or misrepresenting things. This renders the affections carnal, pollutes the imagination with sensible images, and agitates the whole man, soul and body, with various and contrary affections. It is this which enslaves man; "he perceives things *pleasant* to his eyes," his ears, his taste, his touch, his smell, and the more *pleasant*, the more enslaving; for what is it which fixes his *thoughts* on sensible objects? *Pleasure*. What excites such strong *affections* to sensible things? The *pleasure* they afford. What urges the man of sense on to such anxiety, labour, expense, and contrivance to obtain his wishes? The *delight* he promises himself in the possession of the object. And does the gratification of animal desires afford *satisfaction*, in proportion to the expense of gratifying them. Far from it; for a life of sense is a life of perpetual deception. It is all expectation and disappointment. It promises fair, and is generally believed; but the desire is baulked, and the hopes defeated, which (strange infatuation!) only inflames the heart with more eager longings for what has spoiled its peace, and blasted its hopes. It is a dangerous principle; for what impression are spiritual and invisible objects likely to make upon a mind carnalized, darkened, and habituated to the delights of sense? It has taken so deep a root, and so wide a spread, that nothing short of *omnipotence* can remove its dominion in unbelievers, and prevent it in believers. This is one of the strong *cords* and many *bands* with

which Satan holds his captives. It is one quiver of his fiery darts, with which he fires the sensual appetites, and inflames the carnal affections of believers. The power of the passions, immersed in sense, is seen in unbelievers; to gratify sensitive wishes, they expose their health and property, their liberty, and lives. For a little money, or for unchaste pleasure, a man will ruin his reputation, impair his health, break his peace, and damn his soul. So mighty, so efficacious, is *the sway of sense*, that neither the considerations of heaven and hell, of time and eternity, can break its binding force, without the operation of "the Spirit of Power. And lest Christians should think themselves sufficient to conquer this principle, the Lord often suspends his assisting influence, and leaves the soul to contend with a bare thought, or a sensual desire; they plead duty and interest against the gratification of them; they reason, watch, and pray until they are no more able to *desire* a deliverance from the sweet delusion, than to create a world. This is humbling indeed! Often they have confessed, but now they *feel* themselves to be "perfect weakness." The charm of some sensible object shall be found *irresistible*. It shall laugh at their reasoning, however just and strong. Yea, the more the soul tries to *expel the poison* from the heart and quench the fire of sensual wishes, the more the flame shall rage and spread until *consent* is gained, and a determination formed to *indulge* the flesh, and "fulfil its desires." The believer pleads his advantages, his obligations, his experiences, his present and future happiness; he urges the consequences of *falling openly* to himself, the church, and the world; the advantage Satan will take of it in all his trials of life and death; but he pleads in vain. He sighs, he ponders, he reasons, he pauses, he exclaims, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

No. CLX.—Restlessness of the Wicked.

"The wicked cannot *rest*, they are like the troubled sea." How just the image! how miserable the ungodly! They are not like the sea, in its stillest moments; but when troubled by the winds. And what can be more restless than a person under the sway of carnal passions! If he gratifies his sinful wishes, *fear* torments him.—Guilt breeds fear and shame, suspicion and anxiety. Conscience smites and foretells a day of reckoning. Self-condemnation follows the commission of sin. The pleasure of sin being gone, by gratifying it; the *sting* of it has the greater power. The soul sees its folly and hates itself; not as sinful; but as miserable. Every alarming Providence awakens suspicion that God is coming near to judgment. Censures past on others, it hears and trembles at. But on the other hand: if the object of sinful desire is not attainable; what contrivance! what labour! what hope and despondency! what dis-

appointment! what care! what criminal thirsting, longing, waiting! and all in vain. What is esteemed necessary to happiness, the soul cannot reach. It knows it, and is miserable. What then, does it cease all efforts to obtain it? No; it tries again and again, whilst disappointed hope, and raging desire, with despair of satisfying it, tortures, enflames and enslaves the soul; and whilst conscience and Scripture declare, that God will punish the unholy creature, according to the wickedness of his wish and endeavour.

No. CLXI.—Besetting Sins.

Every believer in Christ knows, that he who is not able, through the Spirit of God, to conquer his besetting sin, is not a Christian. He may be tempted and troubled with it; but if he is habitually *conquered* by it, he is no Christian. If any sin reigns, which he knows and allows, he is yet in his sins. This being known to every Christian; it becomes, in some circumstances, a matter of distress.—He is drawn, perhaps, out of the path of duty, and finds himself unable to resist temptation; and as this is experienced *every* time he leaves his duty, he says to himself, "Well, it now appears to me, that I have no grace; for whenever I am in such a situation, which aids the temptation to my once favoured sin, I *always* feel my heart *yield*; and if opportunity were afforded, I am sure I should commit the sin again. It is plain then, that I have deceived myself; for if I can stand, only when I am not in such a trial, it proves me destitute of faith, which would help me to resist and vanquish the temptation. If I were a believer, I should find Christ's grace sufficient for me." This objection is very plausible, and therefore distressing to an upright mind; but it is founded on a *mistake*. For it is not an evidence that I am without grace, because I do not find it assisting me out of the line of duty! For instance; suppose a Christian goes into company where he is sure to be tempted to sin, and is as sure, that neither God nor conscience *approves* of his going. He goes, and falls into sin. He repeats it, and falls again: and then grieves, not only because he has sinned against God; but also, because he has left his own mind in doubt about the reality of his conversion. If he had been converted, he thinks grace would have conquered the temptation. But if he had as much grace as Saint Paul, it would not keep him on *suspicious ground*. If so, the grace of God would encourage us in sin. No! thy weakness *out* of duty, is no proof thou hast no grace *in* it. It proves that God is angry with thee; that he will not assist or comfort thee in presumption. And is it any wonder that a believer is not able to resist temptation, when God leaves him, and permits Satan to tempt him? A believer is as weak as another man without God's strength; and is as really without it as another man,

when he leaves the narrow path, wilfully. Thus suspending his influence, he teaches a believer that he is as holy as gracious, and that if he would "meet God," he must "remember him in his way." It is no proof that thou hast no grace, because thou art not able to stand thy ground in any place and circumstances; for God is not engaged to keep you in any place or circumstances, where he does not *call* you. "As thy day, of service and difficulty, *so* shall thy strength be." But if God would keep us out of duty, he must go *beyond the promise*; which I grant he sometimes does, but not generally, and as we have no warrant to expect it, we seldom find it. In the highway of duty, Satan has no power over us; but if we willingly turn to the right hand or to the left, we are in his ground, and there he improves his advantage to our confusion. "He, only, who walketh uprightly, walketh surely." God is with him, and be with God.

If these things were considered, Christians would find God invariably faithful to his word. They would be more careful against walking on *doubtful* ground. They would not only *pray* to be kept from falling into temptation; but would *shun* it and the road to it. Many a man is drawn into public-houses, stays too long, and drinks too much; notwithstanding he prayed against it several days before the time came. God sees the *deceit*. He knows when such prayers are "*without guile*." Perhaps, he goes into company to get business, or keep his reputation with worldly men. This proceeds from *distrust* of God, and from a life of *sense*, which leans to "an arm of flesh;" and from a fear of the *cross*, of being thought a fool for Christ's sake. And such generally are left to fall, and then they lose that reputation they idolized. If we cannot trust God with our characters and business; he will suffer us to feel our own weight; and we are sure to fall. Some think they cannot but be right, because they pray more earnestly than usual to be kept: but they are afraid to "*ponder; (weigh)* the path of their feet." Deliberation, would leave them convinced that they were *wrong;* and hinder those prayers which are "an abomination to the Lord." They ask and have not, because they ask amiss. They *regard iniquity* in their hearts, and God will not hear them.

No. CLXII. Difficult Texts.

It is lamentable to observe, how prone many ministers of the gospel are, to preach from obscure parts of Scripture by choice.—Not that they understand them better than they do other parts; this is not supposable: but I fear, a vain parade of greater penetration leads them on. They wish for something *new*. This will create *admiration*, and ensure *applause* from carnal professors and weak Christians. "He is a fine man! he shows us gospel, where no

one else ever saw it." Many think he sees into the *mysteries* of the gospel, when he only preaches his own *fancies*, and "darkens counsel by words without knowledge." He fixes upon a type, and *strains* it, and weak souls are dazzled with the number of resemblances the minister finds between the type and antitype. They discover some spiritual meaning, where God designed only the literal, and which they pass over. The real meaning of the story of the good Samaritan, they hardly mention; this would be thought *legal*, because *practical*. And as such an explanation, with the duty enforced, would be more likely to make the hearers condemn themselves than admire the preacher, it is avoided; and the preacher passes on to consider the *spiritual* meaning, as he calls it; and the mysteries of his carnal mind being opened, the people wonder at the man's great gifts, and their own enlightened understandings; and pity those who are unable to *discern* what they do. The literal sense of that story, is truly spiritual; but the spiritual sense, which such preachers impose upon it, is *carnal*. Thus the minister's person is held in admiration; the Scripture is perverted. The people diverted from duty, and injured in their dispositions: their pride is nourished by their supposed discoveries, and they "feed upon ashes, whilst a deceived heart, hath turned them aside." It prevents their growth in knowledge; their establishment in faith; it corrupts their taste, carnalizes their passions and leaves their temper unrenewed, their conscience unpurged, their thoughts vain, and their lives unfruitful. I fear such preachers have much more to answer for, than they are aware of! For the various emotions of hope, carnal joy, admiration and self-approbation, occasioned by such discourses, lead many to judge themselves *converted*. And such vain preachers readily flatter them as sincere, enlightened souls; and assure them, that "he who has begun the good work in them, will finish it." They are proud of the minister's approbation, who knows no more of them than that they understand his preaching and admire it: weep for joy, at their own light, wonder they never saw things so before, and resolve to attend such preaching in future. Thus being flattered by the minister and his weak friends, they learn to flatter themselves, "deceiving and being deceived."

No. CLXIII. Evil Affections.

Nothing is more evident than this, that the sorest of judgments in this world, is—to be "given up to one's own heart's lust," to be held under the power of "vile affections." What, like them, can disturb a man's peace? What can so defile, blind, agitate and enslave him? What like them to flatter, deceive and endanger him? What, like them, can deliver a man over into the devil's power, to be tempted, accused, controlled and tormented by him? What like

them to confound all reasoning, darken all Scripture, misrepresent Providence, breed slight thoughts of sin, and hard thoughts of God! What like them, can prepare the mind for error, cherish unbelief of the word of God, feed enmity to holiness, slight the salvation of Christ, the operations of the Spirit, and communion with God! What like them, to create Deists and Atheists; to embitter life, to sting us in death, and drown us in despair, in the prospect of judgment! If given up to their influence, what avail the closest reasonings, the strongest arguments? The mind thus clouded, fears no danger, runs all hazards, stands on a precipice and drinks poison? The will and inclinations thus enslaved, the man is blind to his danger, and dead to his duty? He fears no threatenings, believes no promises, regards no commands of God? His present blessings, his past favours and prospects of futurity, are wilfully forgotten.—He is deaf to the voice of God, the voice of conscience, and the entreaties of divine mercy. God threatens, Christ invites, the spirit suggests, conscience speaks in vain, all in vain, for "like the deaf adder he *stoppeth* his ears!" What then should a man dread or a Christian shun, if not "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." To be delivered up to their power, is the greatest evidence we can have, that God is provoked with us! But through their *deceitfulness*, it is an evidence the least discerned and feared.

No. CLXIV. False Comfort in Death.

Among other methods by which the great enemy of souls deceives men, one great artifice is, to give them false comfort in affliction, and lead them to conclude themselves children of God, because if they had died, they say, they should have been happy. And it is too generally imagined, that if a person dies in a comfortable frame, or is comfortable in the appearances of death, it proves them real Christians. But this is an awful means of deceiving souls. First, because whatever comfort persons may have in affliction, they must not conclude from it, what will be their frame of mind in a *dying* hour. Who can tell what dying is, who never died? Many say they *should* have died comfortably, when the *danger* is over. If the doctor says the symptoms begin to be favourable—*this* is frequently at the bottom of their joy. Nothing like a comfortable hope can be discerned, be heard, till they *think* their disorder is abating.

I may further remark, that if they really are dying—think so—and feel easy, or even rapturous, this is not, it cannot be, any decisive evidence of their conversion to God. For many Arians and Socinians have died, in the same frame, with apparent triumph in their principles. Many heathens have left the world in firmness of mind unshaken, yea, in rapture. Many wicked men depart from the world, in peace. Some are indifferent about their souls. Others

have a false hope; a false assurance, and false comfort. They have natural knowledge, perhaps, of Christ and his atonement, and, build their hopes of salvation upon them, without spiritual conviction, without repentance, without self-suspicion, conflict or fear.—These die "with a lie in their right hand." Ah! how many of the *living*, as well as the dead, are thus deluded! They behold their dying friends, whose lives and tempers have dishonoured the gospel, dying in peace and triumph. They conclude them happy. And too frequently living as they lived, hope to *die* so, and, as they express it, go off in triumph. But who taught us to judge of a man's character, and state, by his frame of mind in death, without the evidence of a Christian character in disposition, experience, conversation or conduct? Yea, when the life affords many affecting proofs to the contrary! Who, but the devil can thus pervert a man's reasoning powers and blind his mind.

Such conclusions, from such principles, exactly suit a heart averse to holiness and spiritual diligence in the service of God; and how lamentable is it to remark, the sanguine hopes some professors entertain of seeing people *die in a happy frame*, whilst they are unconcerned about following them in *a holy life*, as far as they followed Christ: and how censoriously and falsely they conclude on the death of those who die without raptures, without pretensions, without assurance. Affliction and death are seasons too important for Satan's ends, not to be improved by him; and let no one deceive himself, by thinking that Satan's only resource in those moments, is to *terrify*. No! he wishes to *ruin*. He is called a murderer! a destroyer! He "seeks whom he may *devour!*" And if he can do this by terror, he will; but will be contented to ruin a soul by false hopes, false peace, false comforts and raptures. Indeed, this is Satan's masterpiece, to send souls to hell as *comfortable* as possible! I do not mean to say that none are converted in affliction and in dying circumstances. No; I have more hope of one who has lived evidently in his sins, without profession of following Christ, who is convinced, alarmed, prayerful, and looks to Christ in a dying hour, than of one who has known much, enjoyed much, professed much, with the gains of injustice in his hands; a covetous temper, a slandercus tongue, a proud and arbitrary spirit, or a slothful disposition under the mask of godliness. Where a man is always extolling the *grace* of God, without feeling its *renewing* effects, I must think him a hypocrite. Those who have comfort without holiness, have the devil and a deceived heart for their comforters. They look to Christ, and are happy in the *contemplation* of his excellence, without trying to *imitate* it; and in a *speculative acquaintance* with his salvation without *receiving* it. They are like persons who think of their physician's skill with *pleasure* and *hope*; but, not following his advice, have no *cure*, but perish through not *using* what he prescribed.

We often observe persons filled with pleasure and astonishment at a discourse which unfolds the salvation of Christ, and endless in their commendations of the preacher, who yet walk in bondage to the fear of death, have no doubts and fears removed by it, are left as supine and slothful as ever, and are as much enslaved by their besetting sins as ever. They hear of the love of Christ, his blood, his salvation and promises to the chief of sinners; they weep for joy, pray, resolve, admire the preacher and the doctrine, without conviction or repentance.

This is a clear and decisive proof that the mere *contemplation* of such interesting truths, gives *pleasure* to many who never *believe*, *love*, and live under the *influence* of them. To *think* of truth with pleasure is one thing; but to *follow* its direction and comply with its design is another. Many are *acquainted* with the plan of salvation, and *admire* it; *trust* to it; *boast* of it; and live in intemperance, injustice, covetousness, or lust. Many know Christ is "all in all" in salvation, and glory in it, who are lewd, proud, passionate, selfish, conceited, or revengeful. These are described in Scripture as having a dead faith, being *alone*, and without works; as crying "Peace, peace, where there is no peace;" as turning "the grace of God into lasciviousness;" as sinning, "that grace may abound;" as crying "Lord, Lord!" and not *doing* the things which Christ commands; as *foolish builders*, *foolish virgins*, *hypocrites*, having a name to live and yet are dead. They love the promise and despise the precept: "Know their Lord's will, and DO it not."

No. CLXV.—The Grave of a Daughter.

What a solemn and affecting, humbling and instructive, thing is a *grave*. The parent follows her dear offspring to it, half-blinded by tears, which flow so fast as almost to prevent the farewell look. Peace be to thee, mourning soul! for "the Lord bringeth down to the grave," (1 Sam. ii., 6.) Whatever unforeseen cause struck thy child, whatever stubborn disease destroyed thy dear departed, the *Lord* used the instrument, and chose the *fittest* for the work. Christian, be reconciled to *his* will, which is always regulated by perfect wisdom. The proper *time*, the most suitable *means*, and the best *manner* were chosen to effect it—for it was the *Lord!* Dear Ann! how does my heart bleed to reflect on thy very uncommon sufferings! Seventeen long weeks in agonies beyond thy own conception! I still see thy pale and wrinkled face. The sound of thy moaning voice is still in my ears. My eyes still weep, and my heart still aches at the remembrance of thy wearisome nights and more wearisome days, which were appointed to thee. Go to thy grave in peace; for "there the weary are at rest" from all their agonies, but few from more than thou.

When I consider the amazing, prolonged agonies of this dear girl, my depraved reason asks, why was she permitted to endure so much—so long? But I am silenced by the consideration, that it is the *Lord's* doing. He led her by the right way, though a very suffering one. Thirteen years of age; sensible, improved and improving, the most loving and most beloved of the family—but I forbear, and ask not *why thou* art taken at such an *age*, in such a *manner;* for the *Lord*, who knows the best time for every one to die, brought thee down to the grave. The advice of the physician, the daily attention of the apothecary, the ceaseless tenderness of a fond mother, and the labour of a whole family—could not prevent thy departure; for the *Lord*, whose sovereignty is undivided, and whose power is uncontrolled, " bringeth down to the grave." Who could stay his hand, or say unto him " what doest thou?" Say not, fond parent, what reason could exist in the mind of one whose " understanding is infinite," for taking thy child when he spared others. She had lived her time. There was no longer room for her in this world. The moment was fixed before thy existence began. " The *Lord* bringeth down to the grave," by whom actions are weighed; his *own* actions too, as " the God of knowledge." Neither father nor mother could resign her the first or second month; but flattered themselves she *might* recover. Her pains increased, till parents and child could, at least, submit to the stroke. If she had gone in a day—departed in a fit—died from home—been seized with madness—how inexpressibly more painful to her friends, had the dispensation been! But a union of *wisdom* and *goodness* appears in suffering her to linger until she and her parents thought her death would be a mercy. Death kept at a distance till his approach was wished for. What kindness to wean the dying from the world, and the living from the dying, by such a gradual method, as to render death welcome, which had been dreaded. Who can forbear confessing the finger of God, in bringing down to the grave, in a manner so kind to his creatures and worthy of himself!

Farewell, dear girl! farewell! I could have wished to have heard thy last word, and witnessed thy dying frame; but all was right; because it was the *Lord*. Soon shall I follow thee; and one thing I rejoice in, that it will be in such a moment, from such causes, and in such a manner, as the Lord shall judge the best. *Resign* me, my dear wife and children—resign me, my dear friends—for " the *Lord* bringeth down to the grave." Ah! my soul, think—think seriously, that it may be *soon* and *sudden!* Art thou *ready?* Remember when the time comes, death will not be kept off by thy worldly plans, thy cold devotion, thy formal duties. If thy affections are carnal, thy conduct unrighteous, thy body intemperate, or thy mind distracted—death will not, cannot stay, till thou art ready or willing. No! ready or not, the Lord will " bring thee down to the grave," and " when he taketh away, who can hinder him?"

No. CLXVI.—True End of Affliction.

Is it not strange that so many professors of religion should deceive themselves in relation to the nature and design of affliction, as to suppose, that the only thing to be expected in it from God, is comfort; and the only thing to be exercised towards him in affliction is ecstatic joy? And laying this down as a criterion of their state, they are the authors of more evil than they are aware of. Such a sentiment is *deceiving* to themselves and others; to *themselves*, in leading them to *expect* nothing but comfort in a time of trial, which frequently disappoints them, and leads to one extreme or another. Either they fancy themselves no Christians, because, not elevated in joy; or they *feign* themselves happier than they are, lest others should not have so high an opinion of them. It also prevents self-examination, humility, confession of sin, repentance of it. It diverts the mind from the design of God in affliction, and leads a deluded creature "to think more highly of himself than he ought to think," and tempts him to *appear* more happy than he really is, to raise himself in the opinion of others.

Such a sentiment is *discouraging* to God's people. When they observe a professor all peace and joy, desiring others to *praise* for him, rather than to *pray* for him in his affliction; they are prone to think all their past trials *unsanctified*, because not productive of such a lively and seraphic frame. It renders them envious of others, and ungrateful to God; and it frequently happens, that such professors are, while out of the furnace, some of the greatest stumbling blocks in the world; and the more so, in being elevated into the exercise of unhumbled joy in these moments, when every sincere christian expected to find him *humble* and *penitent*.

It is *unscriptural*: for, first, the Scripture represents afflictions as *fatherly chastisements*—as the *rod of God*—as a *refiner's fire*—as *God's furnace in Zion*—and as *God's visitation of his people with stripes*. The are called *the rebukes of God, correcting man for iniquity*. And is *joy* the only thing which suits these expressions? Who that is not blinded by Satan, by his own pride, or popular opinion can think so? I have noticed such high expressions of delight in those whose characters are most suspicious; and who, *knowing* it to be so, have endeavoured to remove that suspicion by a degree of *assumed* happiness.

Secondly, it is contrary to God's *design* in the trials of his people. Is not the end of *correction*, repentance, humility, and amendment? Is not the end of a furnace to *refine*? to "bring forth as *gold*?" If God strikes with a rod, must we merely express gladness? Does this become us under fatherly anger? If he loves those he rebukes and chastens, does he not show a parental authority, care, and dis-

pleasure? If affliction is *God's controversy*, should we not *seriously* examine "wherefore he *contends* with us?" I fear the joy of many is a *despising the chastening of the Lord*," and a "going on frowardly in the way of his own heart!"

If the Lord afflicts for our *profit*, that we might be partakers of his *holiness*, "then to improve the holiness of his people, is the *end* of trials; and we should pray for the accomplishment of this end.—God might have effected it, without revealing his *design* in our trials; but he has *revealed* it, that we might pursue it. Sincere Christian! do not look up to those persons as slanderers of religious experience, who have the most lofty conceptions of God, and the most lively expressions of joy in afflictions; but consider *holiness* as thy end. Alas! how many fine sayings do we hear about the love of God and an interest in Christ, from the lips of those, whose habitual temper is covetous, selfish, proud, envious and daring. Let us see their *tempers* altered;—let them come out of the furnace purged from the love of money, over-reaching, distrustful anxiety, carnal affections and worldly compliances. Let us see the churl become liberal; the unfeeling, sympathising; the worldly man, spiritual; the contentious, peaceable; the proud, humble; the censorious, suspecting himself; the man of evangelic sentiments, evangelic in his disposition, conversation and walk,—*then* we may say, his affliction is sanctified. Let the lukewarm come out of the fire, zealous for God; the trimming man, *faithful*; and the lax man, strictly upright; let us behold numbness purged from the conscience; sin from the affections, and negligence in duty succeeded by a persevering and dutiful activity for God's glory. Let us behold the man more diligent in God's house, more spiritual in his conversation, more self-denying in duty, more upright in his walk, more tender in his conscience, and more concerned for the cause of God; and we will confess that he has profited by his afflictions; for his *holiness* is advanced!

No. CLXVII.—The Lord's Supper.

"The Lord's supper," is the title given to the sacrament. And among ideas implied in that appellation, it supposes, that God's children, the guests at that table, are a friendly society. If several are invited to a feast, it supposes some intimacy in general; and if frequently together at a feast, some union and agreement with each other. This is the case with believers at the Lord's table, they are a *friendly society*. A friendship with Christ and God in him. Does a man invite his *enemies* to his best feast? No, nor does he mix friends and enemies together. If any come to the Lord's table who are not friends to God and his people, their own pride, or the devil sends them; but God never "bade them to the supper." God invites *none* but friends; and he invites *all* who are such. Am *I* "a friend

of God?" Am I a friend to his *saints*? Then I am welcome to the Lord's supper. Friendship with God is founded on the electing love of God, a covenant relation to him, a resemblance to him, and an experience of his favour in Christ, through the Holy Ghost. And a friendly union with the saints, is founded in an agreement in sentiments, in resemblance to each other in spiritual disposition, in interests, in hopes and prospects, in condition and aims.

As God's people have the same wants returning, the same enemies and the same privileges, in general; so they have the same duties. But when do we find a man loving all his friends alike, and discovering the same tokens of his friendship alike, to all his guests? Even so acts Christ; some at the feast, like John "lean on his bosom," and others like the ten other disciples share his favour with less apparent endearment. When a man invites a number of friends to a feast, do they all feel equally friendly to *him*. Seldom or never. And so it is at the Lord's table; some come with warmer hearts and firmer regards than others. May I approach the table, with a just value for the feast, a greater love to the guests; but the greatest love to the *master* of the feast. How unsuitable the temper of that person who comes with ill-will towards the guests! Is not this an affront to the master of the feast? I am not bound to be friendly to the sins of Christ's friends; but to their persons, as he himself is. In the other world, all will be affection and harmony; but in this, friendship is very imperfect, even among the friends of the Redeemer!

It is "the *Lord's* Supper!" He is the author of it, and the commemoration of his person, love, actions, and sufferings, is the design of it. Can I refuse his invitation, which is so kind in its intention? Can I disobey authority founded on redeeming love? Is it possible to vindicate such conduct to God, to man, and to my own conscience? Is it not rebellion, folly, and ingratitude? Is it not a violation of duty—a breach of the tenderest obligations, and an evident neglect of my own best interests? If I stay away, do I not treat an earthly friend with more respect than Christ, by accepting the invitation of the former, and slighting that of the latter? And, surely, if we go away from the Lord's table, and misrepresent the master of the feast, or rail against his friends, we must displease him. If a nobleman invited us to dine with him, our vanity might publish this among all our friends. And should not our grateful affections publish the greater condescension of divine love? If the nobleman had rescued us from miserable captivity, and once a-year invited us to a feast, to commemorate our happy deliverance, were not this an additional favour? What is human love and kindness—what is human temporal deliverance, compared with the deliverance of a soul, by such a redeemer, by such a price, and to such an end?

As it is the Lord's Supper, ministers, deacons, and private members, should beware of discouraging any of those from coming to the

feast, whom Christ invites; or of making any welcome, who are refused by Christ. It is not the ministers', the deacons', or the churches', but the Lord's Supper.

Our *dispositions* at the feast should become its author, its nature, and design, its guests, and the obligations we are under to the Lord himself. We should be sensible of, and grateful for, the benefit; and manifest a temper cheerful, affectionate, and satisfied. How unbecoming would it be, at the feast of a friend, to appear dull, morose, and sour! Would not all think you dissatisfied? If you appeared surly and suspicious, that you was not welcome, but only asked out of *form*, would not such a conduct be extremely affronting and ungrateful? But how much worse, to suspect *Christ's* sincerity! How vilely unsuitable to appear at his table, as if it were to hear one's sentence of death, or to seal our damnation! How criminal to eat the bread with indifference towards Christ, or drink the wine without valuing his blood! What mockery! What hypocrisy! What an accumulation of guilt!

The Lord's Supper is a feast for believing minds—a *feast* for the *mind*: the love and favour of God—redeeming love! The person and offices of Christ! Pardon, justification, security, peace, and communion with God. It is a *principal* feast, as was supper among the Jews, and as is dinner with us. The feast is prepared at infinite expense, and the master of it is "Lord of all!" It is "the LORD'S Supper." If, then, my views of it are wrong, my expectations low, my dispositions unsuitable, I need not wonder at my not benefiting by it. If a man, invited to a feast, feels indifference towards the master, ill-will towards the guests, or satisfies himself at home, and sits down to the table, without appetite, to his friend's food, or a dislike to it, can such a person *enjoy* the feast? If I love the Lord and his saints, he invites me to it. This invitation is particular, not general. On what pretence can I refuse his invitation?

And is my mind *refreshed* by spiritual objects at my Lord's table? If not, is not there a *cause*? The blessings exhibited are such as the mind of a sinner needs. Without them I am undone. If they are not suited to my mental taste, heaven itself could not prove agreeable to me. If these things do not render me happy, can any thing else afford satisfaction? And if not, my *mind* must be changed, and I be miserable. The fault is and *must* be in me. If I do not meditate and pray over my own condition, and necessities as a sinner, the wonderful love and death of the redeemer, the greatness, variety, number of blessings flowing from him, the suitableness and freeness of these favours to every believing sinner, and to *me* in particular, on believing, how can I come with a proper frame of mind to enjoy this ordinance? This ordinance is spiritual in its author, objects, blessings, duties and designs. If our views and dispositions are spiritual, the whole to us, must prove a mere formality, a shadow, a farce.

The Lord's Supper affords experimental evidence of the absolute

need of the Holy Spirit's influences. Without his influence, what effect hath it upon the *ungodly?* It deceives them with false hope, and a mortal peace. It renders their damnation more certain, by making them more *easy* in the way to it. Best of favours! without thee a man may read and hear the word, yea, and sing; be baptized, and take the Lord's Supper, without benefit; yea, with an eternal injury! Without thee, the death of Christ can do me no good, nor Heaven itself be attainable or even desirable! Without thee, no good can be *enjoyed*—no good can be *done*. And what relief can a *godly* man obtain in the Lord's Supper without the *presence* and power of the Holy Spirit? None at all. The force of temptation is not broken; the strength of corruption is not abated; the soul is not consoled in distress, nor the coldness of the heart removed by all that bread and wine represent, or the minister declares, without the concurring energy of the Holy Spirit.

Yea, the Lord's Supper itself, will *injure* the Christian rather than benefit him, without the Spirit's light and energy. He eats and drinks without cheerfulness, without gratitude, and without profit. This cherishes *unbelief*. He is tempted to doubt whether he is a Christian, or whether ordinances are beneficial. This increases his *fears*. He seems the worse for his advantages, and the poorer for his plenty. Being weakened in his faith, his *carnality* is strengthened. Worldly *affections* are invigorated. *Presumption*, too, often follows. The soul attends the Lord's Supper with *indifference*, as a thing of *course*. Thus *formality* enters and reigns, God is dishonoured, Christ is slighted, and the soul is miserable.

But a *fourth* thing which manifests the necessity of this gracious agent, is, the *efficacy* which believers find in the Lord's Supper at different times. What *humbling* views and effects it produces! To one, sin and self appear as they are. What *encouragement* another feels from the love of God, so displayed. So *certainly*, so freely, so fruitfully! Here—desire of the favour and image of God kindles and increases; there—repentance for pardoned sin, and zeal for the glory of God, vie with each other. Here—the troubled conscience is pacified; vile affections are purified; fears are dispersed, and wavering minds are established; there—the snares of life are broken, the fears of death are conquered, and the prospects of eternity welcomed. Here—sin becomes more hateful, Christ more suitable, duty more easy; there—God more known, and heaven more desirable.

If the king grants a pardon to a criminal, who has a mortal disease, how poor is the favour! but, if he forgives him, and sends a physician to heal him, the blessing is important indeed, because *health* and *life* qualify him to enjoy pardon. And whatever we may hear and know of Christ's atonement, unless we know it as the *ground* of our expectation of the Holy Spirit, we are none the better; but much the worse:—John xvi. 14, 15. Forgiveness, and a qualification to enjoy it, are blessings indeed!

No. CLXVIII.—Neglect of the Lord's Supper.

What can be the reason why so many, apparently upright Christians, neglect the Lord's Supper? Is it pride? Do some think a christian society too poor, too few, or too mean and despised? They do: but still the poor have the gospel preached to them, and God regardeth not the rich more than the poor; but "God resisteth the proud," whether rich or poor! And dost thou despise God in his people?—and in his ordinance? "He that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed," saith the Lord, "but them that honour me, I will honour."

Is it *shame*? What will my relations, friends, or neighbours think of me, if I join such a society? And let me ask thee, what will thy *conscience* say to thee in moments of trial, and the hour of death? What will Christ say to you, when you appear before him? And what will you say to him? You know his mind; "He that is ashamed of me, and my words, in *this* adulterous generation, of him will I be ashamed, before my Father, and his holy angels!" Remember! Time makes no change in *his* mind: he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Is it *fear?* the fear of *man?* What! forgetting the Lord thy Maker, art thou more afraid of disobliging a man, a worm, than of disobeying the God in whose hand thy breath is? How wilt thou settle this with thy judge? After thy judgment, this will be the account of thee, "He was speechless!"—"The fear of man bringeth a SNARE; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Those who fear man more than God, are courageous indeed; or rather desperate, to venture on the displeasure of God, to please a dying creature! But they have no courage for God and their souls; no! here they are *cowards*, where courage is necessary and honourable: "but the *fearful* shall have their part in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Is it creature *love?* Does this keep thee from the Lord's Supper? Dost thou say, if my wife, or my husband were converted, I would take it; but they are not, and it is unpleasant to go without them: it would hurt their minds. Or does thy brother, or sister, nephew or niece, friend or neighbour, dissuade thee, or bias thy mind, to neglect it? Where then is thy integrity, and faithfulness to Christ? Where is thy love to him? Hear and tremble! "He that loveth father or mother, wife or children, or life more than *me*, is not worthy of me, and cannot be my disciple." And dost thou say, "I trust I do love him?"—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." Any other evidences without this, however various, numerous, and esteemed, they stand for nothing with Christ, but evidences of thy insincerity. They cannot satisfy thy own conscience. Christ commands you one way, your friend another; and "his

servant you are, whom you obey:" whatever you profess to the contrary.

Is it *prejudice*? Does this keep thee from joining a christian society, or receiving the Lord's Supper? Is there a person in the society, whose *character* you do not like? Perhaps you judge him ignorantly, rashly, unjustly; if so, you will meet with "the same judgment." If some have defects, have *you* none? If not the *same*, have you none as bad in God's sight? If you have not, you certainly neglect your duty to him. "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother, but thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, lest thou bear his sin." Where is thy faithfulness? Hast thou had any quarrel with any one of them? Art thou *displeased* with any of them? Does *this* hinder thee? But does this excuse thy disobedience to Christ? Suppose the character of some in the congregation does not meet thy approbation; does this dissolve thy obligation to Christ? Will this be thy plea in judgment? Does it afford you satisfaction even *now*? Thou complainest of something wrong in others, and art easy in the known, open neglect of an easy indispensable duty to God. If thy brother does wrong, expostulate with him. If thou art under the power of evil surmising, this is criminal. I would not have thee join a society of drunkards or pharisees. No; this would be to countenance their sins; but do not seek an imperfection in another to excuse a crime in thyself. Thou that sayest a man should be consistent with his *principle*, art *thou* consistent? Thou that sayest a man should not neglect his duty, dost *thou* neglect thy duty? Dost thou think he will be *condemned* for a neglect, and that thou shalt *escape*, who doest the same thing?

Is it thy *unworthiness*, which prevents thy compliance with Christ's command? It is true, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Strictly speaking, no man or angel is worthy of the honour of doing any service to God. An obedience to the *least* command of God, is the honour and happiness of the noblest creature in the universe! but what creature can *merit* or be *worthy* of that honour and happiness? The word *worthily* here, means *suitably*. He that eateth and drinketh with unsuitable *views*, *dispositions*, and *aims*, perverts the *end* of the ordinance, and is as truly condemned for *abusing* it, as a christian is, who wilfully *neglects* it. Who, then, partakes of it unworthily or unsuitably? He who partakes of it *ignorantly* and *carelessly*, who knows not its *design*, nor cares to understand its nature: such do not *discern* the necessity, the *extremity*, nor the *efficacy* of the Lord's sufferings, in the body he assumed, as a sacrifice for sin. Can this be a suitable treatment of such dignity and love? Is such *indifference* a proper return for such sufferings as he endured for sinners? What! is Christ remembered in this ordinance, to be despised and neglected? Ho! ye lukewarm souls, in eating and drinking so, your conduct is con-

demned, and the Lord's table becomes your snare. To eat and drink in *unbelief*, and *allowed sin*, is eating and drinking unworthily. To celebrate what we doubt the *truth* of, is mockery? If we do not rely on Christ for pardon, and the Holy Spirit, both which are bestowed through his sacrifice, can we act with a *suitable* regard to the Father's love, wisdom, and justice, in the death of his son, which we profess to commemorate? If we do not so remember Christ, as to treat him as a *Saviour*, we "trample under foot the blood of the Son of God!" we treat it as the blood of a common man. If we attend that sacred ordinance with *hope*, built on the atonement and intercession of Jesus; with affection to, and gratitude for, such salvation, how unbecoming our dispositions! how hateful to God! and what a sure argument they afford for our greater condemnation! If we come to the Lord's table *hypocritically*, depending on Christ for *pardon*, and not desiring *holiness*, we abuse his agonies, deceive ourselves, and receive the ordinance to heighten our misery. A self-*righteous* spirit, which rests in the duty, short of the Redeemer, and an Antinomian spirit, which rejects Christ's authority and will, whilst it pretends to rely on his sufferings, are both abominable in God's sight. To the former Christ died in vain, and the latter will receive a greater damnation.

If it is received with a *worldly* spirit, to comply with an established custom, or to qualify for, or introduce to, a civil office, the *ends* of it are perverted, and Christ dishonoured. To attend it with a cold and lukewarm spirit, without humility, without repentance, without solemnity, is to cherish a spirit of mere *formality*; and is *that* good enough for Christ? a proper return to God, and a frame becoming a favoured sinner? No, surely! but every man's *conscience*, as well as the word of God, must condemn such a person. "Then let a man examine himself," and if he finds a humbling conviction of his sinfulness, misery, and danger, knows no other foundation of hope than Christ crucified, and desires, sincerely, to be devoted to the will of God in all things; "*So* let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup." Does that word "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," frighten you? it should be rendered *condemnation*. If they were believers in Christ, who come with a carnal frame of mind, as to a common feast, they were condemned by God's word for such conduct, and chastened by his hand, to sickness and death. "For this cause, (that is for eating and drinking in so sinful a manner) many of them were sick and weakly among them, and many slept," that is died. God enfeebled their constitutions and embittered their lives, yea, pursued them to the grave for an *abuse* of his ordinance. This is the condemnation which a *believer* has to fear, who abuses the Lord's Supper. But if he wilfully *neglects* so plain and *easy* a duty, he as really does it to his condemnation as if he *abused* it. Many think little of this. "He that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." "He that *knows* his master's will

and does it not, shall be beaten with MANY stripes!" Read these lines and tremble, O man! whosoever thou art, that makest light of this ordinance by *neglecting* it. Dost *thou* not know thy master's will? canst *thou* plead ignorance of duty? If not, expect *stripes!* stripes from God, and *many* stripes! You know he can strike thy *body*, disorder thy frame, inflame thy bowels, burn thee with a fever, touch thy brain, weaken thy senses, or break thy bones! He can tear holes in thy purse, by the apothecary, thy children's sickness, or extravagance, by loading thee with unforeseen expenses, and draining away the profits of business. He can strike thee in thy relatives and friends. He can strike thy character, as a man and a christian, by leaving thee to the power of thy lusts, and "the scourge of the tongue." He can burn thy habitation and thy storehouses by the smallest cause. He can make a flaw in thy insurance, and a mistake in thy writings, which shall ruin thee. He can strike your mind, and make your own "thoughts trouble you." He can give you up to a wavering purpose; to a thousand fears and perplexities. He can make thy soul forbode misery in life and death, and tremble in the apprehension of its eternal doom. Remember, Christ represented the wicked as cursed at the judgment, not for what they *had*, but for what they *had not*, done.

No longer plead thy unworthiness, as an excuse for neglecting a plain duty; but "follow the Lord *fully*." Thou art unworthy of thy food and raiment; of thy friends and property; thou art not worthy to read the Bible, to pray, or to speak of God; but are these things to be *neglected*, for thy want of a soul *deserving* of them?—If thou art not a suitable subject for the Lord's table; surely, thou art not fit for *Heaven!* And if so, thy condition is bad indeed.—And do not think *that* either modesty or humility, which keeps thee from a clear duty. If so, thou art *deceived;* for it is thy *pride* which renders thy obedience to God: thy feigned humility is nothing but *disobedience!* Upon *thy* plan of acting, any person might say, I am not worthy to eat, walk, read or pray, and so I may neglect duty.

Is it *covetousness* which keeps thee from this duty? Sordid wretch—dost thou grudge the poor members of Christ, a sixpence, or a shilling a month? If this is all the love thou hast to Christ's people, how dwelleth the love of Christ in thee? If thou art poor, and unable to contribute sixpence a month to the poorest of Christ's flock, it is not *required* of thee: but if thou art able, but *unwilling*, and rather than do it, neglect thy Lord's commands, thou art a mere hypocrite. Nevertheless, thou art not obliged to give a *farthing* at that ordinance, from any command of God: but surely the custom is becoming and useful. Surely, it must be pleasing to God and the Redeemer, to behold this expression of our love to him, by our love to his poor saints. Yes—when we celebrate *his* love, in giving himself, if we return a cup of cold water in love, he will

accept, yea *reward* it. Beware, lest the love of money, which is the root of all evil, should be the root of thy neglecting this ordinance. For "the covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." If thou perseverest in this disposition, to the last, "thy money perish with thee."

Is *carnal reason* or *self-will* at the bottom of thy negligence? Perhaps thou art satisfying thyself with this thought, "the Lord's Supper is not necessary or essential to salvation." But what is the *meaning* of this phrase? It means in thy mouth, that if thy soul is saved, thou art unconcerned about the *will* of Christ any farther. Suppose it not necessary to *salvation*, if Christ has *commanded* it, is it not necessary to thy *sincere obedience* to Christ? Is not thy obedience wilfully partial? And canst thou think thyself *upright*, in the allowed disobedience to a divine command? Ask thy *conscience*? Could you be easy in the constant neglect of secret prayer, or reading the Scriptures, or hearing the word of God? If not, why think there is less sin in this? Is hearing, praying, singing or reading an ordinance of God? So is the Lord's supper. Is not sincerity essential to thy *comfort*? And if thou canst be comfortable in a wilful disregard to a known duty, thy comfort is deceiving thee, and must be repented of.

Is not love to Christ essential to thy salvation? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accused, when the Lord cometh," to execute that curse. Dost *thou* love Christ? How dost thou *prove* it? Christ says, "if ye love me, keep my COMMANDMENTS." Is not the Lord's supper to be attended to as ONE of these commands? Is not your love *partial*, and therefore *suspicious*? But you say, it is not essential to your *salvation*. What do you *mean* by salvation? A deliverance from *hell*. And how do you expect *that*, if not by a deliverance from *sin*? Is not every act of *disobedience*, a sin against God? Here then, is *one* sin, which you love, live in, plead for, and that against knowledge, Scripture, warning and conscience! A man of upright heart, not only examines himself; but wishes God, to use *his* knowledge, to discover to him, his sins and duty. But if *you* should pray as *they* do, your soul, surely, must tremble at the consequence. "How can you say—*search* me, O God! and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be *any* wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Observe,—he says *any* wickedness or sin, whether of omission or commission.

Is it *distance* from any Christian society, that keeps you from this ordinance? If this is *really* the case, thou mayest be blameless.—But if you are *unwilling* or *careless* about it, thou art "verily guilty." If you go a much greater distance, for interest and pleasure; if you find means to travel in order to pay visits, and do worldly business, your excuses are frivolous. What, not once a month, find a way to commemorate the sufferings and love of him, on

whom you profess to build all your hopes, and to whom you are under such immense obligations! That is a cold love indeed! which will not constrain thee to go a few miles to hear God's word, and do his will. Either deny that thou art a follower of Christ, or if one, deny thyself.

Is it mere *suspicion*, that if you were to propose yourself to a religious society, they would refuse to admit you? But you may easily find out their minds. Ask them, and then if refused, the fault of not attempting it will not be *your's*. If your temper and conduct are becoming the Gospel, they cannot consistently refuse you. But perhaps, Satan keeps up this suspicion in your heart, to keep you from your duty; whilst those who know you, and secretly love you, wish you would join them, and wonder you do not.

Is it any *imaginary difficulty*, in gaining admission to the Lord's table, by relating some necessary parts of your *experience* of the grace of God. Where lies the difficulty? You know what God has done for you? Begin where he began, and simply go on in your account, as he led you, by his grace and providence. If you are convinced of the evil of sin, and human nature; of the holiness of God's law, and the justice of your condemnation by it. If you build your hope on Christ for pardon and life; for holiness and strength, and desire to live in communion with God and his saints; if you *feel* these things, surely, you can *say* so, before a few Christians. And if your temper and conduct agree with your profession, you have nothing to fear; for a Church of Christ, so far from *discouraging*, will be glad to receive you, when they see reason to believe that the LORD has received you. The more you *shun* the duty, the more *difficult* it will appear. Well *consider it*, and the difficulty is removed; it is all *imaginary*.

Let us now suppose you are in the company of five and twenty Christians, in a parlour, or a vestry. They enter into conversation with you —one asks you (perhaps the minister) how long you have known the Lord? What you thought of God and yourself before? You could easily answer these queries to the best of your knowledge. If another asks, why you wish to partake of the Lord's supper; you can easily answer, because Christ has commanded you, saying, "This do, in remembrance of me." You can say, that communion with God's people is your delight, and that you think it your honour to join them in keeping all the ordinances of the Lord. And where is the *difficulty* of all this? It has no existence, but in thy fearful mind. If you cannot *speak* your mind before a company of Christians, you may *write* a short account of God's dealings with your soul. If you cannot write, two or three of the members may receive your account, in a full and familiar conversation, and relate it to the church for you. And you cannot think this unreasonable. Surely, less trouble you cannot have in any matter of importance, than merely to speak a few words.

Let not *pride* hinder you, for fear your account should not be equal to that of some other believers. Be humble and upright in your views, and fear not. And do not mistake, or forget the *design* of such a practice. It is to satisfy the church of your sentiments and character. And not to regard these things, would violate Christ's command, and put an end to all church fellowship. If you regard the character of a servant, before you hire him or her, for fear you should hire one who is slothful, idle, dishonest, or a liar; surely, the church of God is of more importance than a single family. God's people are called saints, believers, disciples of Christ, followers of Christ, children of light, sheep, new creatures, religious soldiers, fellow-citizens, the family of God. And it must be necessary to *examine* all who join a Christian society, lest unbelievers be planted in the church. Tares will be sown by the *enemy* of souls, after all the care a church can take; but that is no reason why *they* should *themselves sow* tares among wheat. The church and the world are different societies. The saints must "come out from among them and be separate." "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel!" Therefore, "be not *unequally* yoked together with unbelievers," is the divine command to the *church*.—Now to satisfy *the church*, about the views and character of any one who wishes to join the society, is the end of hearing what is called their *experience*. Not the satisfaction of ministers and deacons merely, but all the *members* have an equal right to know, who is going to be admitted, and an equal right to speak for, or object to the proposed member, on his own knowledge.

But perhaps the fear of a *church censure* is the reason you refrain from the Lord's supper. What can this *fear* arise from? I suspect, from an indulgence of some sin. Why afraid of rebuke from the church, if you are not conscious of any thing wilfully wrong in your conduct? You fear restraint perhaps: you think you dare not indulge yourself in many *little liberties*, which you now enjoy, if you joined a Christian society. But you cannot think, that the Church of Christ can bind you, where the *word of Christ* does not. The will of Christ should be their rule, and your's too. And I am sure you cannot consistently claim the character of a Christian, if you wish for any liberty to sin. Besides, could you desire to join a company of Christians, who would allow any member to sin openly, without an open rebuke; or privately, without a private rebuke? Impossible; for then a member might injure your character or property, and the church must *approve* of his conduct, if while knowing it, no censure was passed upon it. If many eyes are upon you, and keep up a watchful spirit, this must be a blessing to you. "Bless that chain, which binds you to God and your duty." The liberty of a Christian is *holy* liberty, being bounded by the commands of God. "I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts." Doing God's will in faith, is freedom: but every deviation from it, is a degree of slavery.

Perhaps you ease your conscience, in the neglect of this duty, by forming a *purpose* to attend to it, at some future day. And can you really *satisfy* yourself in deferring a plain duty? What, be happy in *dispensing* with a positive command of God? If so, you can lay no claim to a tender conscience, and an upright heart.—You cannot say "your rejoicing is this, the *testimony of your conscience*, that in all *simplicity*, and godly sincerity, you have your conversation in the world." No, your conscience cannot bear any such witness, nor afford you any such joy.

Have you *fixed the time*, when you intend to regard your duty? Perhaps not, for fear it should not prove agreeable to you even then. If you have, and can allow yourself time to flee from your duty, do not wonder if God should allow himself time to punish you for it. Besides, your conduct is highly presumptuous. Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a DAY may bring forth." Before that time arrives, God may throw you upon a bed of languishing, and never allow you the privilege of attending his house again. "Make HASTE, and DELAY not to keep his commandments."

No. CLXIX.—GRACE WITHOUT OBEDIENCE.

THE doctrine of grace, cannot be too freely preached. It is the only source of a *sinner's* hope, or of glad tidings to lost men; but it may prove the savour of death unto death," to many, through an awful abuse of it. It is one of the *sharpest* instruments Satan uses, against the souls of men. He succeeds here, the better, because unsuspected. They think, surely, I cannot be wrong, whilst grace, free, rich, sovereign grace, is my theme, my hope and my song?—To hear a man declare, that Christ is his only hope as a poor lost sinner; that he has no good works to plead, is very pleasing; but when you observe this person negligent in his duty, carnal in his conversation, or indulgent to some sin; how perilous his condition! He many *speculate* upon doctrines, with rapture; but his speculations are carnal, and his rapture delusive, whilst allowed *guile* or deceit is in his spirit. "He hears the word, and anon with joy receives it," but his joy is selfish, sudden, transient, carnal and barren.

The ministry of *the spirit*, is essentially necessary to the *profitable enjoyment* of the work of Christ. But this is overlooked by many, whose whole concern terminates in God's ancient purposes, without considering that God "predestinated his people, to be conformed to the IMAGE of his Son." They so consider what God *has* done, as to neglect what God is *now* doing. They talk much of *what* Christ *has suffered*, and forget the *ends* of his sufferings.—"He gave himself for our sins, that he might redeem us from ALL

INIQUITY." They glory in the obedience of Christ, and neglect obedience to him themselves. They wish for redemption from misery, not from *sin*. They aim at happiness, through free, rich, sovereign grace; but neglect *holiness* as the *effect* of that grace.—They rejoice in the *doctrine* of grace, without *advancing* the doctrine in their temper and conduct. All exhortations to duty, they consider as *legal*, and assure you, that such exhortations are *not necessary*. They insist upon it, that if the grace of God is in the heart, that will secure all the rest, without enforcing duty. But are they wiser than the prophets, the apostles, and Christ, who used more exhortations than any thing else, upon those who *had* the grace of God in their hearts? Are they wiser than God, who *inspired* them? If God thought them necessary; we ought to think them so; and rather follow the Scriptures, than those, who pay themselves the compliment to suppose they have the grace of God, and that they need no recommendations of duty. But is not this their *pride?*—To think themselves so ready to their duty, as not to need the commands God has given them? Look at the great talkers about the grace of God, and you will find them *mere* talkers. They are for nothing but *comfort* in hearing sermons. Every thing which mortifies pride, shakes their false joy, detects their darling sin, points out their neglected duty, they deem legal, because practical; and needless, because troublesome. If they follow the fashions, and imbibe the spirit of the world, still the preacher must say nothing but grace! grace! and they will cry peace! peace! Examine FACTS, stubborn FACTS.

These very persons are *covetous*, over-reaching in the market and in the shop. Unjust, in the *quality*, or *quantity* of what they sell. Their distrust of God and his providence, leads them to form alliances with ungodly men to get money. They can find time to sit with drunkards for hours; are more punctual to meet at the public-house, than at the house of God. They drink to excess, and let their creditors go unpaid. Their visits are carnal; their friendship selfish, and improved for self-interest, under the mask of being lovers of the doctrines of grace. If you want *evidences* of their conversion, you must not look at their *temper*, which is often sour, envious, carping, proud and deceitful—nor to their conduct, which is formal, artful, unholy: but to their *tongue!* They *say* they make Christ *all in all*. And if this will not satisfy you, hear their cavils against ministers, fellow Christians, or the world. They can backbite, misrepresent, gossip away time in mere idle chit-chat; and after all sing—*Grace! Grace!* These are they, who receive the grace of God, that is, the *doctrine* of grace, in VAIN!

Many Christians object to *exhortations*, as *unnecessary*; because the grace of God in the heart, will *constrain* every one who has it, to obedience. Now if this is true, nine parts out of ten, of the old and new Testament, are *useless*. But who is willing to expose

themselves to the curse denounced against those who "take from the words of God's Book." Thus they render the word of God "of none effect." What *pride!* to declare, that though "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is *profitable*," yet many who are esteemed Christians, declare the commands, exhortations, counsels and cautions contained in the Bible, are unnecessary. And let ministers tremble, lest, through the fear of man, they should "withhold what is profitable" from their hearers. This "fear of man bringeth a SNARE; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be SAFE."

In some, this conduct proceeds from *ignorance* or *inconsideration*. They do not discern, or consider the nature of man, the deceitfulness of the heart, nor the *nature* and *tendency* of the *preceptive* parts of Scripture. They suppose them unsuitable to those who have grace in their hearts, *because* they have grace.—Whereas, this is the very thing which renders the exhortations suitable. If the apostle spoke, or wrote to, or concerning those who *had not* the grace of God, then he showed the necessity of the *condition* and *disposition* being changed; instead of using mere exhortations to the various duties of Christians. He shows the *sinfulness* of their hearts and lives, and exhorts them to *repent*. —He proves their guilt, desert, condemnation and misery, and exhorts them to *believe* in the fulness, freeness, and suitableness of Christ's salvation. He knew that the *acts* of a new creature, could not proceed from one, not "born of God." Their *state* must be good, before their *actions* could be so: and their *hearts* changed, before they could exercise spiritual dispositions. He knew the *tree* must be good, or the *fruit* would be bad. But if he addresses men who "had tasted that the Lord was gracious," he *exhorts* them, "to lay aside all malice, all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings." "He beseeches *them* as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." To them who were the elect unto sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, who were begotten again to a lively hope, who loved an unseen Saviour; to *them*, who surely had the grace of God in their hearts, he says "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end. Be ye holy in all manner of conversation—pass the time of your sojourning here in fear—love one another with a pure heart fervently—have your conversation honest." Believing husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, kings and subjects, ministers and people, he instructs—reproves—rebukes—corrects and rightly "*divides* the word of truth." But if those who say practical preaching is unnecessary, when a person has the grace of God in his heart, are *right*, all the apostles are *wrong!* all the prophets are wrong! Christ is wrong! God who inspired—all are wrong!—Perhaps such persons would *pretend* to shudder at such language: but it is *their*

own. It is their sentiment properly expressed. And if they do not shudder at *themselves*, who are guilty of such a conduct, it is because "their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

I know there are many *preachers* who hold forth nothing but *doctrines*. Some, to please their good subscribers, sell the truths of God, and the souls of men for money. And although their preaching is thought *evangelical*, they do not evangelize men, but *carnalize* them. They do not "the work of an evangelist—but of a deceiver," preaching for "filthy lucre!" or perhaps they are afraid of the name of Legalist, Arminian, Moralists, or lest some fashionable lady, or cavilling gentleman, should say "I hate so much *of*—DO, DO." If a minister is exposed to such persecution of the tongue, he must *endure* it, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He must take up his cross and follow Christ, "through evil and good report." He must not be "ashamed of Christ's WORDS," however unpalatable they may be to lukewarm christians; and whatever hard *names* of Arminian and Legalist, and such like, the tongues of Antinomians, under the name of Calvinists may use. "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, and *fulfil* it," and do not shun to declare *all* the counsel of God; and be not a man-pleaser, for if you yet seek to please men, you are not "the servants of Christ." "Let not men be your *masters*, nor *custom* your rule." "*One* is your master, even Christ;" beware of breaking one of his *least* commands and *teaching* men so; lest thou be found the least in his visible kingdom.

But it is easily observable that some *sin* loved and adhered to, is the cause of preferring *doctrine* to *precept*. How often it happens, that the person who is an enemy to a close, searching ministry, is disposed to follow some forbidden *fashion*, to comply with some worldling for interest, or for carnal pleasure. And if some favorite lust pleads successfully, it will persecute the minister who opposes it, as Herodias did John the Baptist.

But the minister of God must not be intimidated by their cold looks, obscure hints, or their attempts secretly to hinder the good effects of his ministry. No! if he preaches smooth doctrine instead of faithful rebuke, God will confound him, and require their souls at his hands. Such pretended lovers of the doctrines of grace, are very great enemies to *self-righteousness*, but not *half* so zealous against all *unrighteousness*. And they are more ready to censure a man as self-righteous, who is humble, self-denying, holy, diligent, spiritual and zealous, than to censure the backbiter, the wordlyminded, the proud, the censorious, the vain, the over-reaching and over-bearing —for their *unrighteousness*. If a man has a tender conscience, is watchful, active and punctual in the means of grace, aims at a *growth* in knowledge and grace, they call him a *good* man; but a *weak* one. He is too scrupulous and legal, in their estimation. They pity him for giving deligence to make his calling and election sure.

They wish he had the liberty of the gospel; by which they mean, a disposition to be easy, in a negligent, partial, sluggish regard to the means of grace.

Now, thou word-professor, I doubt not but thy *conscience* condemns thee, when thou art passing sentence against a diligent active christian; rather as a plea for thy slothfulness and sin, than for anything you really *think* wrong in him. No! it is not his zeal, which leads thee to censure him; but thy own *deadness* and *carnality*, which thou seest by the liveliness and brightness of his character. You call him *legal*, because you are *lazy*. You cannot bear the comparison between his diligence and thy negligence; his spirituality and thy levity; his doing and thy talking; his practice and thy sentiments. Yes, poor lean soul, thy *conscience* tells thee, whilst thy *countenance* tells others, that thou *enviest* the man thy tongue censures. And when he is brought to thy mind, thy conscience charges thee to "go and *do* likewise."

Thus it appears that your objection to exhortations, cautions, and practical preaching, springs from ignorance, or inconsideration. From custom, in following certain preachers or Christians. From pride, which leads thee to prefer doctrines to every other part of Scripture, to oppose them to the *commands* of God, by declaring them unnecessary.—Or thy opposition to the searching, practical part of the ministry of the gospel, springs from thy *aversion* to some plain duties, which thou canst not bear to have urged upon thy conscience by a faithful preacher. But perhaps thou art a *Calvinist*, and hast been instructed to suppose that Calvin was a man, who preached the *doctrines* of the gospel, and left the grace of God in the heart to do the rest. If this were *true*, as it is *false*, what would that weigh against the practice of the Prophets, the Apostles, and Christ? What is human authority, in matters of faith and practice? Is John Calvin's name in the Bible? was he an inspired prophet or apostle? Was John Calvin crucified for you? were you baptized in his name? But to suppose such a sentiment was John Calvin's, is false, and cannot be admitted by those who have read his works. Yet there are many proud enough to call themselves Calvinists, who are diabolic in their tempers and sinful in their conduct. And others affect to be called Calvinists, to indulge some error, without suspicion, under that name. And if John Calvin, eminent man! had declared his belief of any mistake, must I embrace it? So far from it—that, if you receive the truth, only because such were *his* sentiments, the truth, itself, will be injurious rather than useful to *you*.

If the grace of God in the heart, simply considered as doctrine, were sufficient to secure believers in comfort and obedience, then why do the Apostles use so many commands to christians? Why so many cautions, counsels, exhortations, and threatnings, used to prevent

their sinning? When God says, "if his children forsake my law," Ps. lxxxix, it supposes they *may* do it, although "*his children*;" and surely his children have the grace of God in their hearts? And when a child of God forsakes him, the grace of God in his heart, which did not prevent his falling, will not *restore* him. No! that grace must be excited, enlivened, increased, by the Divine Spirit, or the soul would never more return to God. Christ says, not *thy*, but "*my*, grace is sufficient for thee." And if Christ's grace is our security, we are not secure but in *the path of duty*. If we expect his grace to be manifested in our weakness, like St. Paul, we must "*beseech* the Lord thrice," that is again and again; and not dream of grace in the heart being sufficient, whilst we indulge a slothful spirit. Many pretend to honour the grace of God in their hearts, who make it a mere plea for neglecting their duties: and while the tongue loudly exclaims, "grace! grace!" the temper is vain, proud, restless, censorious, earthly, or indolent; and the conduct manifests no *evidences* of grace in the heart. Fellow-christian, beware! do not take *their* word for it, who, to cherish a false peace, cry up the *all-sufficiency* of grace in the heart, neglect the means of grace, or hate exhortations to duty. Had *Peter* the grace of God in his heart? Was it sufficient to keep him? No; much less to *restore* him. Surely *David* had the grace of God in his heart, but did it keep him? No; when he neglected his duty, he fell. How was he restored; by grace without *means?* No; he was charged, convicted, warned, encouraged, by a minister of God,—Nathan. The means were blest, and answered the end. This boasting of the efficacy of grace in the heart, and hatred of cautions, commands, and exhortations, may lead to hell—but never can to heaven.

If such professors are right, all chastisements must be unnecessary. God afflicts "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." He thinks the grace in us *insufficient*, of itself; and, therefore, afflicts us, to make us feel the need of *more* grace. "He giveth *more* grace." The great use which carnal professors and the devil make of this error, is to stop the mouth of a minister from using cautions, warnings and exhortations. They both hate that free grace and good works should be preached together. The devil and a carnal heart love to see works received and grace rejected; or grace received and works despised.

A minister of God must be aware of his *own soul*, and not be afraid of a charge of legality. Let him read Ezekiel, iii. 20, 21. Such professors who seem admirers of grace, and hate *practical* preaching, are in the pursuit of *comfort*, and comfort *only*. They hear, read, talk, and pray for *comfort*. If they miss this end, they consider the time and means lost upon them. But such mistake the *ends* of the gospel, and the gospel ministry. "*Instruction* in righteousness" is one end of it; I mean, in the experimental and practical regard to righteousness in disposition and conduct. Hear this, ye who set one divine truth against another. Paul against

Paul, Christ against Christ, and God against himself. Hear, and learn the ends of Scripture:—"*It* is profitable for doctrine," this you agree to; "for reproof;" this is profitable—if the reproof is taken and improved; "for correction" of error in understanding, corruption in practice, or evil in disposition, "and instruction in righteousness;" not merely *imputed* righteousness, for that is included in the *first* clause, "*doctrine*," but in a rectitude of disposition and conduct. This you account legal, unnecessary, injurious, and hateful; and so prove, that *you* are not *profited* by what you read and hear of God's word; yea, that you do not esteem this part of Scripture *profitable*.

Such a sentiment, disposition, and conduct, are displays of rebellious pride and self-sufficiency, under the mask of friendship for the doctrines of grace. Such a sentiment opposes the whole current of Scripture, leads many to be contented without their duties, lays stumbling-blocks for upright minds, stops the mouth of a minister, is ruinous to many souls, and an awful imitation of the devil! Matt. iv. When he tempted our Lord to presumption, "cast thyself down," was his temptation, "for he shall give his angels charge concerning thee." Behold the devil preaching the doctrine of God's particular providence, by the ministry of Angels! He assured our Lord of the grace and favour of God towards him; but for what *end*?—the same which he leads others to—presumption. But whilst the devil preached the *promise* of God, he left out a *part* "to keep thee in all thy ways." Such is his conduct still, and such the conduct of many who are led by him. They quote promises *without*, and even *against* precepts. They encourage themselves and others to believe the doctrines of grace, and the promises they wish to hear and take comfort from; but no signs of a gracious and holy, a humble and teachable, disposition, appear in them! They seem to love sound doctrines; but not "the things which *become* sound doctrine," Tit. ii. 1.

We are prone to seek truth in extremes. Some, who rather *dote* upon the righteousness of Christ than *esteem* it, *believe* in and *plead* it with God, for the justification of their souls, have little or no concern for the work of God's Spirit upon the heart, renewing them in holiness, day by day. They say fine things about the sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and love of God. They have good *notions* and good *expressions* about the *Providence* of God, the sufferings of Christ, the grace and goodness of God appearing in both; but *silent* about the *designs* of God in both. Or if they mention his designs in providence and redemption, it is very *partially* done. They say they have nothing to do but *admire* his grace. This sounds very piously; but often springs from self-deceit or hypocrisy. Such men seem ravished with their own *notions*. If we admire divine grace *consistently*, we cannot admire it too much. But if we forget the *design* of it, namely, to render us like God, our notions are "like the light of the moon—cold and clear:" and they will leave our hearts frozen and barren. I am always suspici-

ous of that person who seems to shun his own company, by making sound notions of spiritual things his refuge, his theme, his standard of real godliness. Such persons dwell in the *outworks* of godliness. They love the decrees, the doctrines of grace, the providence and perfections of God for the subject of conversation. They dwell upon the atonement of Christ. The blood of Christ and redemption by it, is all their theme. All this is very plausible. And, if it were possible, such persons would deceive the very elect. Many of them *are* deceived for a time by such pretenders; but they are easily detected by discerning Christians. "You shall know them by their fruits." Their sentiments, temper, converse, and conduct, will discover their hypocrisy. Such persons profess to admire the compassion of God in *forgiving* sin; but not his power in *subduing* sin. They talk much of an election to *heaven*; but not of an election to *holiness:* talk much of the end, and expect to attain it without walking in the *way* to it. The *grace* of God is much on their tongues; but nothing of its *effects* appear in their *lives* or *dispositions*. They extol the *doctrines* of grace, and neglect the *means* of grace; or attend them in a very partial, formal, self-sufficient manner.

They recommend the blood of Christ; but forget the *ends* of its being bestowed—for pardon and *purity*. Or speak of the sufferings of Christ, so as to overlook the operations of the Spirit. Or if the Spirit's power is allowed to be needful, they so depend on the Spirit's assistance, as to think the cautions and exhortations, and the means of grace, almost *needless*. They profess to believe the Holy Spirit assists them; but does the Holy Spirit dwell in God's children to render them *slothful*? *Knowledge* they wish for, if it can be obtained by hearing sermons or the conversation of ministers; but their knowledge deceives and ensnares them. It makes them *vain*, confident, and censorious. They are charmed with their own notions, which have no energy, life, and efficacy in them, like the light of the sun, which warms, enlivens, penetrates, and makes fruitful. Their faith is only a belief that they are *right*. The threatnings of God they read without awe, and his promises without love. The exhortations they think they *need* not; but every blessing their self-love presumes is their's. Their faith is *dead*, being alone, or by itself; without warrant, without a divine Author, without a gracious temper, a holy conduct, or the noble train of kindred graces.

Such persons hear ministers, not as the ministers of God, but rather as criminals standing at *their* bar. They hear more to judge the minister than to judge themselves. The only profit they receive from sermons, is to exercise their talents in *applauding* or *censuring* the minister. If they say it was a good, a tolerable, a sound, or excellent discourse, they applaud themselves for so doing; but are not anxious for God's approbation in their *improvement* of the sermon. If they *censure* the sermon, as poor, obscure, defective, or legal, in its

matter; and declare the preacher was very cold in his *manner*; this is a sufficient apology for their neglect of prayer and meditation all the day or the week. They either lay all the blame upon the minister, or divide it between him and themselves. Or if they allow the whole fault might be in *them*, they are not seriously and humbly *affected* with lost opportunities—a sufficient proof that their confession is not their real sentiment. They blame themselves in *jest*, and cannot bear any one should think what they say to be *true*. Thus they appear to themselves *believers*, without believing: and judge themselves humble for condemning themselves, without thinking they deserve blame. Nor need we wonder at this, for "out of the heart cometh *deceit*."

No. CLXX.—A Right Temper under Trials.

When I have been free from painful trials, I have expected to continue so; and when I have had a trial, I expected that to be the last. If I am delivered from this difficulty, I hope my path may be smoother for the future. This is natural, and springs from a heart possessed of self-love, self-will, and self-deceit. Self-love suggests, surely! this trial will be sufficient—self-will *would* have it so, at all events; self-conceit thinks that it would be *best*, and self-deceit assured me it *must* be so. This disposition, then, is evil in its *origin*: and it is equally so in its *effects*. For, whilst the mind is flattering itself with a flowery path to heaven, a trial comes. Our path becomes rough, and our prospect clouded. This disappoints and saddens us. And if the heart is left to its own natural operation, it will feel proud surprise, unbelieving despondency, and impatient desire to be easy. Satan magnifies real evils at such a time, and creates imaginary ones. The mind is then unhinged for prayer, praise, or patience. What, then, shall I do to remedy this disposition?—Through Divine assistance, I will *expect* trials, and *prepare* for them. What numerous ills, would such a temper prevent! Am I free from any particular trial? I will *expect* one. Am I under a trial? I will expect succour in it, benefit by it, and deliverance from it. Am I delivered? I will expect another, and strength equal to my day. Such a step tends to break the force of a trial, when it comes; prevents much vexation under it, and leads the mind to seek *advantage* by it. It promotes our gratitude also; for when we expect trials, and are preserved from them, we wonder at Divine goodness. This is humbling. But when we do not expect trials, we do not *heartily* believe we *deserve* them. This is pride, and pride disappointed, excites rebellion; and both increase the burden of the cross. This is as *foolish*, as it is sinful and *injurious*. Sin dwells in our souls—our souls dwell in corruptible bodies, and both in a corrupt world. The saints which dwell near us are imperfect, the

world is full of snares, the heart is deceitful, and the devil malicious. Is it likely that we can escape trials? It is impossible. Well, since we cannot *escape*, may we never, by any sins, provoke God to *send* them; by our imprudence *increase* them when they come; nor, by our unbelief, sink under them in despair of relief, nor lose the benefit of them; since "*all things work together*" for the *best*, "to them that *love God*."

No. CLXXI.—Mercy to Pardon.

It is the great artifice of Satan to keep us from truth and duty, or to lead us to extremes in receiving the former and fulfilling the latter. He represents sin as trifling or unpardonable: the former breeds presumption, the latter despair, and both destructive principles. But the design of the gospel, and of the Lord's supper, which holds up to view its substance, is, to represent sin as inexpressibly hateful and evidently pardonable. The Lord's supper exhibits the death of Christ, as the fullest evidence of the *evil* of sin and of God's readiness to *pardon* it. 1. The death of Christ originated in the will of the Father, Heb. x., 5—7. "I come to do *thy will!*" "*He* found the ransom." Can we doubt of his readiness to *forgive* sin, when the provision for it *began* with him? The goodwill, grace, and love of the Father in the gift of Christ, as a Saviour, affords *amazing* proof of the *evil* of sin, in the necessity of such a sacrifice; and an evidence of his readiness, and intention to *forgive* believing sinners, equally amazing. The second circumstance in the death of Christ which opens the nature of sin and the mercy of God, is the *glorious person* of the sufferer. The express image of God's person, Heb. i., 3. His only begotten son! John iii., 16. Must *he* suffer, to atone for sin? "Will not *this* suffice?" to prove sin "exceeding sinful," that we might *love* it; and evidently pardonable that we might love God. "If he spared not *his own son!*" but gave him up to suffer and die, on *purpose* to make way for the exercise of his mercy, can I doubt his *readiness* to forgive me if I confess or forsake sin? On what ground can I build a doubt? But thirdly, his *design* in the death of his son, was to "finish transgression"—"He bore our sins."—"He was made sin for us."—"Made a curse for us." Dan. ix. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Gal. iii. 13. Would God provide a full satisfaction to his justice, and punish sin over again, in those for whom Christ died? His law being honoured in his life, and its penalty endured in his death, for sinners; can he be frustrated? Will his Father *deceive* him? Would he delight in the sufferings of his own son, if he did not design to save sinners, as the *reward* of his sufferings and the triumph of his grace? No! in proportion to the greatness of his person, the greatness of his sufferings, the greatness of the Father's love to him, and the kindness of his *de-*

sign in all, to punish and pardon sin, arises the *evidence* of this truth, "There is *forgiveness* with God!" But a *fourth* circumstance in his death, which evinces God's delight in pardoning sin, is his *acceptance* of him. He "loosed the pains of death," raised him from the dead, and now "he liveth to make intercession for his people."

Who that really believes these four things in Christ's death, can be *insensible* of the evil of sin, or despair of receiving pardon on repentance? Stupidity and jealousy, doubts and fears must give way, if this vast evidence of God's mercy is received in the light and power of the Holy Spirit. God has revealed no greater proof of his willingness to forgive a returning sinner; and if we study to eternity, we cannot think of one so great. In vain we wish to hear new men and read new books, and hear fresh sermons; if we overlook this great manifestation of God's grace. Here is the *report;* "there is forgiveness with God!" and here is the *evidence* of its truth—God, of his own mere *grace*—sent his dear and equal son—to suffer and die, instead of sinners—that "whosoever believeth in him might receive remission of sins." Do we *believe* the report? Does the evidence *satisfy* us? Does it remove our *hard* and *jealous* thoughts of God? Here let us dwell, and come to a *point*. In vain we depart from this mighty evidence of God's delight in mercy. Where can we go? Who can bring us equal evidence? Where can it be found? This must suffice at *last*, or we are ruined. When a Christian is asked how he is, and answers, "my heart is very hard and cold, dark and weak; but God is a sovereign." He *deceives* himself, while he neglects a duty, and lays the blame of his barrenness on God's *sovereignty*. It is true; God is *sovereign;* but is he not *faithful* too? Has he not *promised* his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? The blame must be in us, or God is a liar! But "He is not a man that he should lie." How awful to set one attribute against another! This promised Spirit is the author of faith, and on him we must rely, to enable us to "*believe* the record God has given of his son." Look at the Son of God! consider the glory of his person, the greatness of his sufferings, and the design of them, and *believe* that through him "Jehovah is gracious and merciful; *forgiving* iniquity, transgression and sin!" "Here is the *fact* and the *evidence* of it; *believing* it—go, *confess* and *forsake* thy sins, and find mercy."

No. CLXXII.—Sanctified Knowledge.

Sanctified knowledge is a great mercy, and greatly differs from mere *national* knowledge. The former *humbles* and *renews* the mind and affections; the latter puffs up and carnalizes them. The pride of knowledge is clearly manifested, by the conceit which some have of their views and sentiments, and the free and fearless manner in which they judge of the sentiments of others. When

those who are thought young converts are taken into a church, the first temptation they are liable to, is to form a better opinion of themselves than before. The judgment of a minister and church in their favour, too often leads them to "think more highly of themselves than they ought to think." They soon begin to be mere "sermon-hearers and sermon-judges." They lay much blame on the preacher, censure his discourses very freely, and will not even suspect themselves to be wrong. No, the minister who has made the gospel his study night and day for many years, is treated as a *novice*, and those who judge him, and are really the novices, think they are oracles, and some of them wish to be the minister's oracle. They will tell him he is too *practical*, if they are negligent; and too *doctrinal* if they are legal. And which of the two must the minister attempt to please?—Neither. A minister who is "a man-pleaser,' is a soul destroyer. Sometimes these assuming ones are men, and sometimes *women*. Women who rule their husbands, especially if they are deacons, will be restless to rule the minister. Man of God! call no man master upon earth; nor any woman mistress; "*one* is your master, even Christ." The wives of some deacons do inconceivable mischief in churches. Deacons are frequently men of some property. Their conversation with the people, and distribution of the church's money to the poor, give them influence. And if their wives rule them, *they* try, through them to rule the minister. They talk fair to him, and fair to the people. Say *one* thing to the minister, and another to the people. The minister hears their observations, sees their duplicity, and learns the propriety of this apostolic remark—"deacons' wives should be *grave*, not *slanderers*, faithful in all things."

No. CLXXIII.—Persevering Grace.

Many a Christian little conceives what he is preserved from, whilst kept from the actual commission of his besetting sin, and in a lively contest with it. He may think his attainments low, his grace weak, his case deplorable, and think of many who are far *above* him in knowledge and peace; and by a comparison, hardly supposes himself a partaker of grace. He is tempted to think his situation very pitiable, to entertain hard thoughts of God, and, as he fears he has no grace from God, he has no gratitude towards God for it. Being discouraged, the soul slackens its pace, resists temptations more feebly, attends duty less punctually and with less life. It grows careless in and of duty. Sin entices, Satan persuades, corruption rises, opportunity offers,—the soul falls. Immediately "its eyes are opened to know good and evil." It recollects its former conflicts and victories, compares them with its present state of weakness, guilt, fear, and shame, and thinks the former a *heaven*, com-

pared with the latter. Now the soul sees its folly and ingratitude; wishes itself in its former state of conflict, watching, and prayer. It sees the mercy of being kept. Oh! says the soul, may I but rise from my present guilt, shame, and weakness, and be restored to my former frame; instead of murmuring at my lot, I hope to endure the warfare patiently, "watching unto prayer."—The soul mourns, prays, resolves, and looks forward to the moment of its restoration to holiness and joy.

Another season of temptation comes, and plunges the soul into greater sin and misery than before. This teaches him his *weakness*, shows him how powerful in-dwelling sin is, and that he has been upheld by a divine arm, when he thought himself left of God. Perhaps he may be defeated, conquered, perplexed, and discouraged by repeated conquests. Hereby he learns the power and malice of Satan, the strength of corruption, the need of God's Spirit, his obligation to unceasing prayer and watchfulness, the misery of the wicked, the patience of God, the suitableness and need of Christ, the bitterness of sin in God's frown and a tormenting conscience, the power of grace, the privilege of death, and the desirableness of heaven. This piece of experience may teach a private Christian more sympathy for his fellow heirs, and make him more prayerful for souls in temptation. It renders a minister more tender, prayerful, watchful, skilful, experimental, and useful. He learns how to speak a word in season to them that are weary by violent corruptions, and strong temptations, and sad backslidings. No tongue can tell, how far a believer may draw back, and yet not draw back unto perdition. He may certainly fall back into greater sins than he ever committed before his conversion. This was awfully and evidently the case with David. We never read of any murder or adultery that he committed, till after his conversion: and he committed these after the most signal providences of God, on his behalf as a king, and after the richest experience of God's favour as a christian. He was warned and chastised; he repented and was restored; his life was useful, and his death triumphant. Such deep perplexities of soul, as are better felt than described, may follow such a fall into sin. The soul, one moment may think of rising into liberty, life, and peace; and the next, feel its imagination inflamed, its desires roused, its affections fixing on, and its will consenting to, sin. Now it may think the conquest of its corruptions easy, and the next minute seem to feel it *impossible*. Despondency and hope; courage and fear; diligence and languor, may agitate and toss the soul. When such a soul is restored, "a remembrance of the wormwood and the gall," may make it tremble at the approach of temptation, and urge it to God in "instant prayer."

No. CLXXIV.—The Fall.

It is too much the case with many hearers of the gospel, that they suppose the preaching of the fall almost needless, at least to *them*. But this is a great mistake. It is not enough to know our fall, as we know our alphabet or grammar. We must *feel* it. And unless we often feel it, we shall very seldom enjoy salvation. A just sense of our fallen condition lies at the bottom of our spiritual concern, strong desires, and fervent prayers. We cannot be sincere in our gratitude, humble for our sins, watchful against temptations, vigorous in our love to God, nor lively in our faith towards Christ, without a serious consciousness of our *fall*, in its nature, effects, tendency, and extent. When we feel our guilt, the sound of a *Redeemer's sufferings*, and the mercy of God, are big with meaning. When we feel our mental diseases, the name of Christ as a *physician*, is understood and valued. Sensible of our proneness to wander, the title of a *shepherd* becomes dear; and such is the Saviour.

No. CLXXV.—Christian Liberty.

The word liberty is frequently in the mouth of a Christian. It means something which many boast of possessing, and which many long for: and, when taken in a scriptural sense, signifies a freedom of *condition*, from the curse of the law, and a state of favour with God. This many have who are unhappy. But an enjoyment of this state, implies the knowledge of it; and such a soul possesses liberty of *conscience*, from dread of punishment; a liberty from bondage to self-righteousness and ignorance; from error; from the reign of carnal reason, sense and corrupt affections; and so, a freedom from the dominion of sin and Satan. Pardon frees us from the curse; justification entitles us to heaven; both being known, the soul is free from fear of hell and death; from the guilt and love of sin. Before this; all the religion of such a soul is slavery. Many are sound in doctrine, and so free from errors which affect their salvation, who are slaves to their lusts; some to the lusts of the flesh, others to the lusts of the mind, and some to both.

Some use prayer and praise, and every other duty, as the means of keeping conscience quiet in sin.

Others, exercising their gifts freely in conversation, prayer, and writing, mistake it for spiritual liberty.

Many, confident they have nothing to fear, because Christ is often in their thoughts and mouths, make use of Christ,—

1. To hide their sins from themselves. They forget their sins, and imagine this is living by faith upon Christ. Had they a just view of themselves, their present views of Christ would not support them.

2. They use Christ to excuse them from duty, and comfort them in the neglect of it. They contend that faith in Jesus is every thing; and presuming they possess that, care for nothing else. Christ is used to justify their partial regard to truth. Then, comparing themselves with some conscientious and diligent believer, they interpret his tender regard to the divine will, to mean legality and scrupulosity; and triumph in what they think their own large and evangelical views. This feeds their pride. And some weak Christians, seeing their ease, may exclaim, "I wish I was like you!" And in a few months or years, change their tone and cry, "how I was deceived in that man!"

But the liberty of the gospel is spiritual and holy. It is a liberty in coming to Christ, and God through him. A freedom in our meditations on spiritual things;—the free exercise of the fruits of the Spirit:—a free enjoyment of gospel privileges, and discharge of gospel duties. These are the first fruits of "the glorious liberty of the children of God!"

The nature of gospel liberty is much mistaken by those who greatly admire the *name*. The name is often extolled, and the thing despised. A mere *pretender* to it, is one who boasts of it, thinks and speaks lightly of others, as deficient in the knowledge of the gospel, because they do not, cannot talk with that assumed confidence of their interest in the Saviour's love and death. These persons are so confident, as never to doubt of the safety of their state; or so proud and deceitful as never to *own* it. Their walk is lax, and their conversation doctrinal, and speculative. The decrees of God, election, the death of Christ, and final perseverance, are almost their only themes. On these they *so* dwell, as to forget *themselves!* They speculate, reason, and dispute about these; and are free and liberal in censuring all who deny any of these doctrines, or do not hold them in their bigoted way. And if another professor should say, I reverence the decrees of God; but they are deep and hidden, and are no rule for my conduct; election is a glorious truth, and I wish to make my election *sure*, by making my *calling* so;—the death of Christ is the foundation of all my hopes; but I want to feel its *purifying evidence*;—final perseverance I admire, and read it clearly enough in the Bible; but I wish to enjoy, prove it true, and honour it, by actually persevering. I am afraid, lest, whilst I contend for the *doctrine*, I should neglect the *experience* and *practice* of it; for I see many who are zealous to prove, explain, and defend the doctrine, who *stand still!* and others who, boast of the truth of it, and go backwards. Others glory in God's *finishing* the good work, without evidence of its being *carried on*, or even *begun*. It is not enough to read, "the righteous shall hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger;" without inquiring whether *I* hold on?—and grow stronger!——If a soul talks thus; they say he is practical and legal; and is not brought into the liberty of the gospel. Awful, awful self-deception.

No. CLXXVI.—A Quiet Conscience.

One great part of the deceit of the human heart is discovered, in attempts to quiet conscience, by resolutions to shun sin, without forsaking the *avenues* of sin. Sin is a harlot; and the only way to escape her destructive charms, is, to "come not nigh the door of her house." To pretend a hatred to sin, and yet rush into temptation, manifests the *power* of sin over the affections, to be so great, as to over-rule reason, conscience, and interest. If we venture into *the way* of temptation, when we might avoid it; or continue in it longer than duty calls; or indulge an unwatchful spirit in the place or season of temptation, and think of the sin with delight, and refrain from it through fear, rather than hatred:—these circumstances prove that sin has an awful sway over such a soul. If convictions are resisted, and pleasurable thoughts of sin *lodge* in the mind, the heart will harden, conscience will sleep, and fear give place to the most perilous security.

No. CLXXVII.—The Grave Insatiable.

"The grave is never satisfied," Prov. xxx. 15, 16. The grave has swallowed down one generation after another. The grave is like a voracious monster; it never has enough. The ungodly are received by it; but it hungers for the *saints!* The infant and the fool die; but it opens its mouth for the wise, the ignorant, the poor and the wealthy, the weak and the strong, the old man, the middle aged, the youth, and the child; it receives, and yet it is unsatisfied. Ye grey-headed, ye young men, it longs for you! are you *ready*? It longs for *me;* am *I* ready? The Patriarchs, Prophets, and apostles, it has had; yea, Christ! the Lord of them all; and yet not enough. Ah, humbling thought! "Sin has reigned unto death, and death passed upon all men; for all (in Adam) have sinned." The thought is terrible to the ungodly; they must die, and what follows? The grave waits for you, too, believers; wait ye for that, with faith, courage, diligence, and joy.

The death of every infant proves, that every human life is *forfeited.* If the infant receives the death-blow, before it reaches its third or first year; if it dies as soon as it comes into the world, or finds a grave in the womb,—surely the life of every human being is forfeited. What *forbearance* in God! to spare a creature so many years: and yet how little is this considered.

The fall of an infant manifests the *ignorance* of the human being, in relation to things which do not concern his *duty* or his *happiness.* How mortifying to human *pride!* how confounding to human *reason!*

What *end* could the short life of the infant, of eight months old, answer in this world? Was it born to prove a trial to its parents? to take up their time, employ their care, and raise hopes to be defeated? If it must live—why not longer? If not longer; wherefore was it born? "Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy sight!"

If, then, my life is forfeited, what hour can I call my *own*? What conduct can be justified to my own conscience, which renders me unprepared for death to-day, to-morrow, or any day?

No. CLXXVIII.—Means of Grace.

The means of grace is a common phrase, and a very important one. *Grace!* what equals it? The grace, or undeserved favour of God, communicated to the believing soul in blessings; spiritual in their nature, tendency, and design; blessings as large as our desires, yea, exceeding our very hopes; blessings which are adequate to the capacity and necessities of a soul, immortal in its duration, sinful in its dispositions, and cursed in its condition; blessings which become God in bestowing, Christ in dying to obtain the Spirit in revealing and applying; blessings which are unnumbered and unalienable; which are exceeding the conception, and equalling the existence of the spirit, for which they were ordained! Is it not a favour, indeed, to draw near to God, and to have God drawing near to the soul? To see God and a believing sinner meeting? To have the soul acquainted with God, united to God, resembling God, and happy in God? Is not this a real, great, comprehensive, and incomprehensible blessing? and if the *ends* are so noble, what should we think of the *means* which are appointed to bring about these ends? Alas! alas! it is too, too evident, why the means of grace are neglected; it is because the *ends* to be answered by them are too little known, considered, and valued. If the *designs* of God, in appointing, hearing, reading, singing, meditation, and prayer, were spiritually discerned, could we think of them with indifference, treat them with neglect, and justify ourselves in so doing? yea, should we not rather wish them to occur more frequently, attend them more seriously, be more happy in, benefited by, and thankful for them? The numbers in hell, who are there for *despising* and neglecting them, and the millions in Heaven, who have found salvation in the use of them, preach their importance.

No. CLXXIX.—On Keeping the Thoughts.

The vast importance of keeping the *thoughts*, is increasingly manifest to a believer. They are the medium of good or evil impressions on the mind; and they discover the frame of it in the most decisive manner. If the mind is under the rule of *sensible* things, the thoughts will be employed, principally, about such things. Hither they will not flow now and then, but with a *persevering constancy*. Hither they will flow, in society and solitude, day and night. They may be *interrupted* by the duties of a Lord's-day, or the lively conversation of a spiritual man; but they *return* to the *same objects*, when such checks are removed. If the mind is lively and spiritual, the habitual tendency of the *thoughts* will run towards spiritual objects. The soul may be clogged in its operations, amused by trifles, staggered by temptations, and diverted by novelties, or by unpleasant company; but it goes back to its intimate and suitable objects with greater force, and the thoughts dwell upon them with the additional delight of renewed friendship.

The *freedom* of thinking indicates the state of the mind. Fear may constrain, and pride may force the mind to think of what is *disagreeable* to it; but still the thoughts fly to their favourite object, as to a centre. There is a *bent* of mind discovered towards sensible or spiritual things, by the *complacency* which attends them. The thoughts may necessarily be engaged about objects which *disgust* the mind, as a man obliged to visit company whose sentiments and taste he abhors. Here the prospect of *ending* this painful association affords pleasure, and shows where the most *delightful thoughts* are. How true are the words of Solomon, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." A man is not always what he appears to be, when he *speaks* and *acts*, but "as he *thinketh* in his heart," with freedom, delight, and constancy, "so is he." This decides his state, this discovers his *real, internal character*. Whatever a man's sentiments, profession, duties and sufferings may be, his *affectionate thoughts* show the Christian or the devil.

Money is the object of the most cheerful, anxious, and perpetual thoughts of a covetous man. He revolves in his mind the *means* of gaining more: new plans are constantly produced by his fruitful invention. The pleasing *consequences* of growing riches are painted on his reflections. Could we HEAR him THINK, we should hear such language as this: "On such a day, I shall receive such a sum, and I'll lay up most of it. I shall be asked for something for the support of the gospel and the poor, but I cannot afford much. Nor is it necessary that I should give much, as there are others who have more money and less expenses. Besides, a little will support the gospel, and the poor ought to work, then they will need but little. There is much false

charity in the world, and it is hard to know who is really needy. We should beware of extravagance, as many have been ruined by it." Thus he thinks of what money he has, how he may keep what he has, and obtain as much more as he can. His thoughts contrive excuses which may *justify* his selfishness. Thus the object of a man's warmest passions, will always employ his most *lively* and *abiding meditations*. Other objects may divert, and court him; but on *this* his thoughts dwell most *pleasantly* and *permanently*.—On the favourite object, the thoughts hang with *concern*; they hover over it, and about it; view it on all sides. The mind thinks *deeply* and *anxiously*. It thinks with fear, hope, desire, delight, according to the situation of the darling thing; the thoughts seem *bound* to it; and when other subjects engage the tongue, the thoughts are flying from them, and crowding upon the thing the heart most dearly loves. If this very subject should be talked over, then, "out of the *abundance* of the heart the mouth speaketh." It has an *abundance* of thoughts, and a variety of affections to display concerning it. A man may talk in a lively strain, when his mind is overspread with a cloud of gloomy thoughts, like locusts preying upon it. This shows how wrong our judgment of persons may be, and enjoins us, "not to judge by outward appearance, if we would judge righteous judgment." And how different do *we* appear by our words and actions, to what we are *internally!* And how impossible it is for us to know our hearts, without closely *examining* our thoughts; and equally impossible to *govern* our hearts, without much attention to the offspring of them;—our first thoughts.

No. CLXXX.—Supposed Strength.

A good man oft thinks, in the absence of temptation, that he is strong, and can resist one if it comes; and when temptation is present, he thinks he should be happy, if God would remove it.—The temptation departs, and he sinks into languor and inactivity. It is true, he is not now in any sensible danger of falling into that sin; but then he is unable to rise to God. Both these instances prove human weakness; and the necessity, reality, and importance of the Holy Spirit's power and grace. Sometimes the mind may suppose, that if God would withdraw the temptation, it should obtain strength in the absence of it to resist its next approach. But alas! it finds itself deceived, for when it is disturbed by temptation, and a fair opportunity offers for conquering it in the *root*; the very *opportunity* itself becomes a burden. This answers good ends, if sanctified: as first—it removes the presumption that a person may yield to a temptation, as far as he thinks right, or convenient, and then escape from it; but when a man finds the presence of the temptation leads him beyond his intention, and that the absence of

it leaves him powerless, till it returns again, and conquer him as usual, he learns his *weakness*. Temptations are not conquered because absent; for they often leave a person for a season, and his pride makes him secure, and his security prepares him for being led captive by Satan. This is one way "of teaching him to profit," and leading him to know, certainly, that his salvation must be of grace. Before, a man may think so, and defend his opinion; but God's design is to *assure* him of it. This discovers the necessity of a higher security, than any within the reach of his own invention.

No. CLXXXI.—Failures in Prayer.

Prayer is a very interesting duty to a Christian; and has for its ends, dependence, request, and worship from the creature towards God; and gracious, seasonable, and suitable communications from God to a believing sinner. When acceptable and successful, it has the glory and enjoyment of God for its object; Christ for its medium; the Holy Spirit for its author; the commands of God for its warrant; a renewed soul for its subject; the promises of God for its encouragement; a cloud of witnesses, and personal experience, to attest its efficacy.

It springs from faith in the promises, a consciousness of spiritual necessities, and is regulated by just views of God and ourselves. But, alas! alas! how seldom is prayer successful! And what can be the reason of its failing?—because the prayers of God's children are too generally but pretences. We too often pray from *custom*. We mean nothing: and if so, can God, who knows the heart, lose sight of it through the disguise of a form, and mistake it for the humble and fervent prayer of faith? If it is a pretence; God sees it as such, and abhors the hypocrisy and lukewarmness of the feigned supplicant, although he is his child. Can *one* prayer, from a child of God, put up with a humble dependence on Christ and his Spirit, miscarry? Impossible! for "God is not a *man* that he should lie;" nor an unkind and forgetful *Father*, who might, in some change of frame, be inattentive to our sincere requests.

No. CLXXXII.—Effectual Teaching.

What a mercy to be taught of God! But many are taught by him, who fear they are not. For instance, I have heard a sermon this evening—it was a good one, but I did not feel it. What shall I say? If I attend to my own volatile heart, it tells me to hear again; to read more, especially some new book. Some *new* book! how strange! that my hopes are raised upon something I am unacquainted with, *because* I am so! What did I then want under the sermon? know-

ledge? No: the truths to me were as plain as they were important. Was it life in the speaker? No: Mr. —— is by no means a dull speaker. Was it attention and reflection on the subject? No: for I found my attention fixed, and my reflection close and serious. What then did I want? Power—the power of God. And can nothing supply the absence of this power?—Not any thing in the whole world. If so, my path is plain—prayer, prayer, prayer! is the grand means I must use, pleading for the Spirit in Christ's name. If God's Spirit is needful, in what way can I expect it but in answer to prayer? I may use *many* means, less spiritual and more agreeable to the inclinations of my heart; but if I do not wish to labour in vain, I must seek divine influence by prayer. No new man, new book, new place, new sermon, or new time, can alter my frame, to purpose. No: God's power, and that only, can afford the mind the one thing needful. But prayer is a *spiritual* duty, and hearing is much easier; and a deceitful heart promises us *that* from the *number* of *easy* duties, which we should expect only from a duty more difficult. Thus many go through years of Sabbaths, scores of books, and thousands of sermons, sometimes amused, and sometimes delighted; often discouraged, always disappointed, and never essentially and radically benefited. No: the mind is often flattered in the prospect of using a means, and very often fatigued in attention to it. It is obliged to live upon deluding promises, or die on the review of disappointed hopes. It trusts to *time* to cure its disorder, conquer corruption, or restore joy; but if time could relieve, should we not hear something of its efficacy? No!—The Bible affirms that all useful and saving impressions on the heart are from God; how vain then to expect them from creatures, books, sermons, time, or change of place or circumstances! Rather let *me* address with confidence and fervour, with humility and perseverance, "the throne of grace." All spiritual benefit *must* be derived from the Spirit of the Lord. This is the *only* agent that can make truth efficacious. The neglect of this ensures perplexity to some, formality to others, open transgression to many, and ruin to most. There is such a thing as vital and spiritual influence from God. We should beware of resting short of it, by neglecting to seek it; by seeking it carelessly, or by mistaking natural emotions for the effect of spiritual—the Spirit's energy. If the preacher is clear, his expressions striking, his manner lively and affectionate; we may, or rather must, be affected by his discourse, whether on philosophy, politics, or divinity; but especially on the latter. And many, many may for a time suppose they are *really* and spiritually benefited, when nothing but the *natural* operations of the passions have been felt.

If a minister is speaking warmly upon the person of Christ, the glories of redemption, or the felicities of heaven, it is very natural to expect in the hearers, emotions of desire, hope and delight. If

hell in its horrors, sin in its effects, God in his awful attributes and threatenings, are discoursed of; it is *natural* to feel the emotions of fear, anxiety, determination to avoid misery, and self-reproach for past folly. The very frame of human minds renders it almost an impossibility not thus to feel. And it is not to be wondered at, if such passions thus awakened, urge the soul to resolutions, prayer, tears, and reformation. These things are *natural* effects of such causes. Terrible and pleasing objects in nature will produce the same effects, with some variation. They are as natural as the gratitude of a patient to his physician, who has restored him when recovery was apparently impossible. In general, danger known excites fear; possible happiness excites desire—probable happiness excites hope—when certain, joy; and when impossible, despair. To confound the operations of God's Spirit, with the natural working of the affections, is very delusive and dangerous. It gives Satan advantages against us. It confounds all characters, distresses weak Christians, and emboldens presumptuous professors. Mistaking natural for spiritual affections, the self-deceived hastily and confidently concludes himself converted, triumphs in his mistake with joy, blesses the minister who occasioned his joy, "with a loud voice," and ventures to call his feelings, spiritual experience. And if this person is constitutionally warm, a weak believer of a cooler mind, may long and pray to experience what this professor does. Alas! a young Christian and a weak one, are both liable to be distressed and charmed by *warm* expressions, without distinguishing natural from gracious affections. How then may a person judge of his being spiritually profited? By the abiding effects, and by these only. If a slothful frame yields to diligence, corruption to truth, the world to God, conscience to the death and authority of Christ, most certainly the spirit of God produced these things. How can a soul be here deceived? But whatever the effects of a sermon, a book, or discourse, while hearing, reading, or talking; if the heart is left under the power of sin, such emotions are not the saving influence of the Holy Ghost.

No. CLXXXIII.—Spiritual Strength.

There are in God's word many promises of *spiritual strength* made to believers; but they are not valued, talked of, pleaded, and experienced among professing Christians, so much as might be expected. And one reason is, that too many who call themselves Christians, are not engaged in those things which *require* spiritual strength to perform them. I observe them; at home, they are contented with the forms of religion, and the stories their servants bring home. In God's house, their attention is wasted upon the

dress or behaviour of some persons there; and an attempt to improve the sermons for others. To pass a censure upon the sermon, or to commend it; to praise or blame a singer, a tune, without judgment, without love to man, zeal for God, or concern for their own souls. "These things constitute the religion of many in the church, and out of it. And does a person need supernatural aid to slander a neighbour; blame wiser and better men than themselves; talk idly, live doubtfully, and act at random? Does that person feel the want of spiritual strength, who slights his Bible, imitates the world, complies with temptations, indulges sinful passions, makes wilful exceptions to God's will, in all cases where it interferes with his own, and performs God's will, in other instances, because it happens to tally with his own? No, no!—It is the man who wishes to deny himself and obey God, without excepting to *any* part of his will; the man who wishes to enjoy, resemble, and honour God; to be kind, faithful, and just to man; the man who wishes to preserve a good conscience, a spiritual mind, and live a harmless and a useful life; the man who aims at the conquest of himself, sin, the world, death and hell, to lay his dearest interests at God's feet; to love his enemies, and be faithful to his friends, to please God, though he displease man; this, this is the man who needs and prays for spiritual strength. God knows thy hypocrisy, poor soul. Thy sad looks, thy good words, thy formal worship, thy gifts to the poor, thy sighs and tears, may all exist without spiritual strength from God. It is the poor in spirit, that will cry for the Spirit to clothe the inner man with might. It is such a soul who wishes to worship God in spirit, bears the cross with patience, enjoys its privileges, and discharges its extensive duties—will "wait upon the Lord to have its strength renewed."

Many a Christian is divinely strengthened for the purposes of the divine life, who questions whether he ever was blessed with spiritual assistance. How shall I know whether I *do* renew my strength? Ask yonder man, who, a week since, was confined to his bed, and now can sit in his chair, how he knows he is stronger? or yonder man, who, last week, could not walk across the room, and now can walk half-a-mile? He cannot explain the *manner* in which his food, rest, medicine, and exercise, have contributed to restore him; but that he *is* restored—that he *has* renewed his strength, he is as certain as that, a few days ago, he could not stand, and now he can walk or run. Thus, a good man, who, a week ago, yielded to temptation, was conquered by his passions, felt gloomy and lifeless, barren and wavering, after waiting upon the Lord, finds sinful inclinations weakened, temptation successfully resisted, the affections spiritualized, the conscience settled in peace, the judgment established, meditation sweet, the cross tolerable, and duty pleasant; that man has as certainly renewed his strength, as the man who, the other day,

could not stand, but can now walk without fainting, or run without weariness; or as evidently as the eagle, which, lately, was so enfeebled through want of food, or injured wings, as not to be able to rise a yard from the ground, but now can, with ease and pleasure, mount up and soar beyond the limits of human sight. It is Satan's policy to lead the believer to judge of the Spirit's work by false rules and false evidences. But we should be careful to compare *God's Word* with our *experience*. There I see a saint's character: is it mine? Here I read the temper, experience, victories, comforts, and duties of a Christian: does the description, in these particulars, suit *me*? If they do, the Scripture ascribes them to the power and grace of the Holy Spirit; and, consequently, this Spirit dwells and operates in my soul as surely as his *works* are there!

No. CLXXXIV.—Power of Good and Bad Thoughts.

The *power* of some thoughts, as well as their *tendency*, shows their origin to be from God, or the devil. A thought enters my mind, whilst musing upon its present condition, and sudden as a flash of lightning—that I shall never be saved. Circumstances may favour such a thought: such as a sense of sin, a dark and gloomy frame of mind, a bad constitution of body, discouraging providences, repeated backslidings, the singularity of my condition or experience, fruitless struggles against sin, a ruffled temper or a searching sermon: such things are matter for Satan to improve; and he may point, arrange, and apply them, and in a moment draw the sad conclusion—I am undone! I am lost! it is impossible for me to be saved. Can words describe the agony such a despairing thought occasions? No! the mind that never felt it, can never conceive it. It is needless to ask whence comes such a thought. Its efficacy discovers a supernatural agent; and its *tendency* shows that agent to be the devil. For, at such a moment, all remedy seems impossible. The thought is inflaming as a poisoned dart: "It is a fiery dart of the devil." The same circumstances may occur at another time, and no such pain be felt. To some, these thoughts are more frequent than to others; and though short and violent, yet they are always painful beyond description.

It is some consolation to reflect that such distressing thoughts are short, and the shorter for their violence; and that they are often the introduction to the richest experience of divine favour. Often has a believer tasted of heaven and hell in the same minute! so quick are the operations of thought, and so *mixed* our condition and experience in this world. Yes, in the glass of revelation, and self-reflection, a soul in a moment sees and feels its interest in Christ's death,—beholds itself beloved and converted of God,

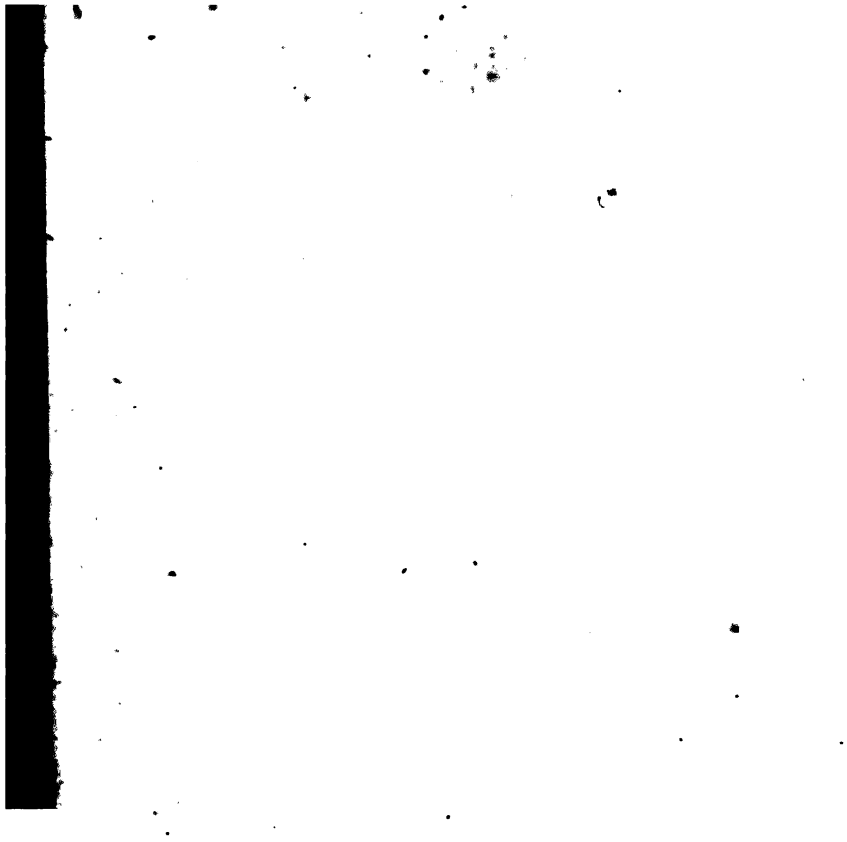
and certain of its future happiness. And so clear is the view, so powerful the thought, that the soul feels astonished at its past uncertainty, and thinks all uncertainty about its state is *past*.—— Time appears short, death amiable, God kind, Heaven sure, and all is well. All this is as sudden and as forcible as the other, and more so; and is, by its tendency to humble, purify, and comfort, and stimulate to duty, as evidently from God, as the other was from Satan.

LETTERS

OF

THE LATE REV. JOHN COOKE,

&c. &c.



LETTERS, &c.

Letter I.—To Mrs. Rimell.

London, June, 1786.

Mrs. Rimell expects me home on Thursday.—I expect it will be on Saturday next. By this you have a fresh conviction that I am a very weather-cock, and that a little breeze will give me a great turn. I had a happy season last Sabbath, at that odd man's chapel; and if the people do not tell lies, they had the same. I find no difference between Christ's presence in London and Maidenhead. The people joined with me in prophesying to the wind—The wind blew,—the mill ground, and the people fed. I have sustained several losses in London.—On Sabbath-day I lost my fears and gloom,—on Tuesday morning I heard Mr. Romaine, and lost an ounce or two of my ignorance,—on Monday evening I heard Mr. D., and there I lost my patience,—on Tuesday evening I heard Mr. Scott, and then I lost my resolution of coming home on Thursday, by wishing to hear him again. With what an unutterable pleasure should I preach, if I were convinced that all my hearers prized an opportunity of hearing as much as I do. It affords my soul so much pleasure, that if Mrs. Goldsmith had not received my promise of preaching her husband's funeral sermon next Lord's-day, I should not come home until Saturday sen'night. Oh! the preciousness of a preached gospel, and oh! the criminal indifference with which it is treated by thousands of its hearers. They loathe it as light food, till taught its value, (if its value can be taught) by its departure from them.

Whilst I am writing, the bell tolls for the Duke of Northumberland. Yes, death fought and conquered even him. Dear friend, if you and I could see death as dead as that great man, should we fear him? No, truly. Well this shall be the case:

death shall be dead to us, if we first die to sin: if we live by faith in Christ, sin shall not live and reign in us. If sin is condemned and left by us, we shall never be condemned and left by God. I hope your leg is *worse*, if, under God, it makes life better. Don't mind hopping and hobbling a little, if by every stumble you get nearer endless health. Look into your bible: speak to it, and let it speak to you. What blessings it reveals! What objects it discovers! Look up to the infallible expositor: read, pray, think, believe, until heaven's realities blaze away the lustre of all created good.—Think that best which carnal reason thinks worst. We ought to do more than others, and bear more too. Bear your afflictions more patiently than others, if God sends them, since you have a better hope. My kindest love to every one that inquires after me, and tell them I may possibly not be at home these two months.

Yours, with sincerity,
JOHN COOKE.

LETTER II.—To MRS. RIMELL.

London, May 8, 1787.

Dear Friend,

I AM now setting out for Essex, with brother Hill, in the possession of a good state of body and mind. Much as I talked in the coach, and walked in London, yesterday, I was not weary. Bless God for this instance of kindness to me; it is one of the best expressions of your friendship to pray and praise for me. I went to hear Mr. Huntington last night, but was disappointed in not hearing him: nevertheless, I heard his spiritual son, with his undorned simplicity, with great pleasure. I am sure a child may teach me, if my pride would suffer me to learn of him. I think of and pray for you. I would say, if I thought it necessary, do the same for me, but I need not urge you to what you would find it difficult to abstain from. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." As *many*! Who does not wonder that God should love any of the human race! To wean us from the world, self, and sin, the Lord rebukes the body with pain, weakness, diseases,—and the soul with anguish, grief, uneasiness, and teazing temptations: but why does he so do? "As many as I love I treat thus," he says, Make the best of your time,

—pray humbly, affectionately, believingly, secretly, and frequently. Pray incessantly, in talking, eating, walking, working,—and let the shop, the field, the parlour, the bed-room, &c., be a *Peniel* (Gen. xxxii. 30) to you. Direct to me, at Mr. Hill's, Great Chapel Street, Westminster. My sincere respects to Mr. Rimell; I hope he will improve this fortnight, as if he and I were to meet at the tribunal of God in the last hour of it. If you think proper, my love to each inquirer. Mr. and Mrs. Hill's respects. Mr. Banfield is ill, but much better. I am astonished at my strengh of body: but is any thing too hard for the Lord? No! not to pardon, sanctify, and glorify you, your husband, your offspring, your servant, and your unworthy and affectionate pastor and friend,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER III.—TO MR. RIMELL.

Bristol, last day of the old year, 1792.

My Dear Friend,

I RECEIVED your letter, and am sorry to hear of what has befallen John; but sin is a fruitful evil, if not especially repented of. The old year finishes in a trying way to some, and the new one will begin as pleasantly to others. The old will conclude as sweetly to one, and the new begin as bitterly to another. But "our times are in thy hands!" not in the hands of our *enemies*—they would ruin us; nor in the hands of our *friends*—for they would keep us out of Heaven too long; nor in our *own* hands—for our ignorance of what is best would involve us in nothing but miseries; but "in *thy* hands, O God of my life!" His *sovereignty* controls all times; for "the times and seasons the Father hath put in his own power," Acts i. 7. His *powerful* agency and unerring *wisdom* reign in every event. He is "the God of judgment," and all causes, occasions, and effects, are regulated by him; and his "*grace* reigns" in every promise, and in every providence, towards those who love and wait for him. But *what* times are in his hands?—our *happiest times*. If we draw near to God, and "our prayer is unto him in an acceptable time," it is because *he* blesses the season. Our times of sickness and death, weakness and strength, success and disappointment, temptation and

quietness, conflict and victory, are under his management. Our seasons of activity and repose, of public and private devotion, of friendly intercourse and necessary separation in life and death, are with him. Whatever occurs to our persons, families, and connections; all, all will happen when, and as he pleases. This great truth should be used as a *plea* in prayer, Ps. xxxi. 14, 15; and if we *really believe* this comfortable truth, we shall plead it, *with God and ourselves*, in the prospect of life, and in each event *as it rises*. Thus *hope* and *resignation* will be promoted, and the recollection of the Lord's "knowing our souls in adversity," Ps. xxxi. 7, and hearing the voice of our supplication when we cried to him, Ps. xxxi. 22, teach us to "yield ourselves unto God," Rom. vi. 13.

It is a very *rousing* thought also: for if our lives are in his hands, he can take them away whenever he please. He can confine us or remove us. He has taken away the old year! but he grants a new one. Chance is no part of the Christian's creed, by *profession*; but, too often, alas! it is so in his *experience*. If we read God's word more, and *believed* what we read, our hopes would not fluctuate at the approach of trials, nor our apprehensions exceed the *reality* of the case, as they too often do. Our peace and joy, desire and prayer, hope and prospects, fidelity and diligence, will always keep pace with our faith; but never can go before it. "All these things are possible (and many more) to him that BELIEVETH." Whatever we suffer, on whatever account, we should be concerned "to suffer according to the will of God." Under every cross, it is well to remember, that *God sends* it; and happy for us if, on the one hand, we avoid *making* a cross *for* ourselves; and on the other, if we never refuse *taking* up the cross when it lies in our way. *God* sends but *few* crosses; but we make many. What God sends, he sanctifies and succours us under. Let us give over the trade of cross-making, in dependance on the Holy Spirit. If so, we must avoid indulging the *source* of this proceeding, which is *self-will*. If we are *reconciled* to God, in his nature, perfections, plans, works, and providences; if we learn to think that all God does is not only good, but *best*; *do* that as best, at all events, which he commands, and *bear* that as best which he lays upon us, we shall find ourselves in "Wisdom's ways of pleasantness, and in her paths of peace." But if we "pervert our ways through foolishness, and our hearts fret against the Lord," let us blame ourselves, and beg restoring grace to subdue *self-will*, and forgive it; and

teach us to "commit the keeping of our souls unto him in *well-doing*, as unto a faithful Creator." What a title! a *Creator*! and, therefore, *able* to support, *console*, and *secure* a soul; a *faithful* Creator and his promises may be depended on by an unworthy, fickle believer, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

Dear friend, look forward, expecting Heaven at the *end* of life, but not before; and succour in the *way* to Heaven, equal to God's promise and your need. Read the Bible much, believe it much, pray much, think of *yourself* much, think of Christ more, and of God, in Christ as "all in all!" Affectionate respects to your family, I include Phillis; and I sincerely wish that their sins of the past year may be forgiven, and the mercies of the new year exceed their sins, their thoughts, and hopes. May they have the enjoyment of the gospel of grace, the Spirit of power, the image of Christ, the favour of God, and the prospect of heaven. These are the springs of a happy new year!

I am, with sincere regard, yours,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER IV.—TO MRS. SHROPSHIRE, MRS. COOKE'S MOTHER.

On Mr. Hervey's View of Faith.

Dear Madam,

THE last time I had the pleasure of conversing with you, Mr. Hervey's view of Faith was our subject; since that time I have read his letters on that precious grace with more than common attention, and must own, that I *dislike* his ideas of faith, as much as I *admire* him as a Christian and a minister. And even in these very letters, there are many striking displays of the *freeness* and *richness* of God's salvation, and of many portions of holy writ, where the nature of faith is described, though they by no means answer his purpose. Quite through these letters and dialogues, he entirely *confounds* faith with assurance; and I defy any Christian to take *comfort* from what *Aspasio* says about faith, unless he is possessed of Mr. Hervey's assurance and mistaken views of it. You know, dear madam, that I do not call in question *his piety*—no! God forbid.—

He certainly was a first-rate Christian; but he has not made a distinction, between an assurance of *the truth* of a promise, and an assurance of my interest in it. For instance, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." This is the report of the gospel. I may have a *full assurance* of the *truth* of this report, and yet be *full of doubts*, whether he came into the world to save *me*. And why? Because my faith may be so *weak* and so *obscured* by temptations, as to leave me *no assurance* that I have any: and if I think I have not, where is my assurance, since none but *believers* enjoy this salvation? Mark xvi. 16. In a former letter, I have hinted at the simple and plain *import* of faith. Give me leave to *supply* those ideas, relative to *one* particular, which is as reasonable to me and mine, as to you and yours, I mean our *respective habitations*— Why am I situated at *Maidenhead* rather than at any *other* place? And why should your fixed abode be at *Hendon*, where you have rarely an opportunity of hearing the gospel? What saith the *Scriptures*? "He hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell all on the face of the earth, and hath determined the *times* before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." Acts xvii. 26. Here are two cheering truths to every Christian; first, that God pre-appointed the *time* or age when we should be born, and secondly, where we should fix our *abode* in the world. Our habitations are obtained by prudential means,' *yet God fixed those bounds*.—Do we *believe* this? So far do we credit the report of God's word; so far we shall be *easy* in our situations, until Providence points out *another* place. *You* have not the advantages of many who reside in London; but then, *God* fixed you where you are; and therefore all things considered, *he* foresaw it good—yea, *best* for you to live where you have lived hitherto. *He only* can tell what consequences would have followed to you and yours, if you had dwelt, or did now dwell any where else. He only can foresee the effects of every cause. *Believe* this, dear madam, and thankfully acquiesce in the divine disposal. No place *in itself* is better or worse than another. *All* are, what *God* makes them to us. All means depend on the divine *blessing* for all their *efficacy*: but the *Lord* depends on none. Many are *cursed* with religious advantages. And many are *blessed* who share fewer, and more rare opportunities of obtaining spiritual favours in the usually appointed means. Believing the above testimony of truth, let us sing:

"Great God? *where'er* we pitch our tent,
Let us an altar raise;
And *there* with humble frame present,
Our sacrifice of praise."

I mean to send you more on this subject, if permitted. At the same time, I should be glad, if you would use the same freedom with my letters, which I have evinced towards Mr. Hervey's. And if any queries arise in your mind in reading on the subject, I will endeavour to solve them if you will send them to

Your's, with sincere respect and affection,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER V.—TO MRS. SHROPSHIRE.

(*On the same subject.*)

Dear Madam,

PERMIT me to offer a few hints upon Faith, as it relates to the *state* or *condition* in which we come into the world. What saith the Scripture? Behold! I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. See, what we are in the *womb*. What was our earliest infancy in the world? "*Foolishness* is bound in the *heart* of a *child*." Mark the *evidence* of the heart's depravity. "As soon as we are born we go astray, and *speak lies*." Does not *every* child manifest this *propensity*? Is the creature better in *youth*? Childhood and youth are *vanity*; the imagination of man's *heart*, is evil from his *youth*. Does the creature grow better as it grows *older*? "Can the *Ethiopian change his skin*, or the *leopard* his *spots*? Then may they who are *accustomed* to do evil, do good." But is there no *exception* to the *general* depravity of souls? "They have *all* gone out of the way; there is *none* that doeth good (in that state), no, not *one*." "God (who could not be deceived or mistaken in the survey) looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand and seek after God:" what was the answer? "No; not *one!*" In this state, what saith the Word of God to him? "*Cursed!* (awful word!) cursed *is* (that is, at this present time) cursed is *every* one (not one is excepted by the Bible)—cursed is every one, that continueth not (to his *latest* breath!) in *all* things written in the Book of the Law, to

do them." Now, my dear Madam, *here* begins *conviction* of sin. It flows into the mind, in BELIEVING that what these Scriptures testify of every fallen creature, in his natural *temper*, *condition*, and *deserts*, is *true*, of *me* in particular. Ungodly persons *read* these Scriptures, but whilst they do not *believe* them, they affect them no more, than if they knew them to be *lies*. No *conviction*, no *fear*, no *concern*, no desire after Christ, till these truths are, more or less, *believed*. Men may believe in the eternity of hell-torments, and yet never believe that THEY *deserve* such misery; but unless they *deserve* the curse, they will never believe themselves *under* the curse, and, of course, cannot even *thank* God for a salvation which they deem *unnecessary* for them. God's most tremendous threatenings against unrenewed persons, work conviction of their danger, when they believe that they are unrenewed—that God never would have threatened them with such woe, if they had not *deserved* it. A hearty belief that God is too *holy* to commune with *unholy* souls; too *just* to connive at the *least* sin, and too *true* to forfeit one jot of his word, works in a soul, *spiritual conviction* of its *real* state. "What shall I do to be saved?" is a question which arises from a belief that the soul is *lost!* hence comes the feeling need of *mercy!* Thus faith is the belief of God's *report* of the state of man, and his *desert*. But before he *credits* this testimony, the arm of the *Lord* must be *revealed* to the heart, Is. liii. 1. Now the grand and interesting inquiry is, do *I* heartily credit these Scripture testimonies, as they relate to all mankind in *general*, and to *me* in particular? Shall I say, dear Madam, do you believe them? heartily believe them? Do you, *indeed!* Yes, you reply: yes; I trust I *do* believe them, respecting *myself*, as well as others. Well, dear Madam, a spiritual conviction of the truth of these testimonies, is *faith!*—Faith, in part of the report or testimony of God respecting fallen man. And what *effects* will such a faith produce in the soul?—SELF-ABHORRENCE. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear (saith Job), but now mine eye *seeth* thee;" that is, now my mind spiritually perceives thy *true character*, from the testimony of thy word; now I *believe* what is declared of thee: "wherefore I *abhor* myself, and repent in dust and ashes"—Job xlii. 5, 6. And, indeed, how can he do otherwise, when he views himself as God views him? and he has learned *God's* views of him from his own declarations in the Bible, which he now believes. *Before* a sinner believes the

scriptural account of the fall, his mind is replete with *self-complacency;* he "thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think." But when he believes the scriptural account of him to be *true*, he then loses, by degrees, that good opinion of *himself*, and his *doings*, which he had indulged, and thinks "*soberly*." *Formerly* he could plead for the *dignity* of human nature, the *honesty* of his *heart*, and the *goodness* of his *intentions*. He had his *infirmities*, it was true; but whilst he judged only by *outward actions*, he thought he was not so bad as many others. Now, reading and *believing* God's description of his *heart*—his heart, which he had overlooked; his language is, "unclean! unclean!" He will feel shame, grief, fear, and self-despair, working alternately in his breast: his self-righteousness, false hopes, fair prospects, and self-sufficiency, are now falling apace. Concern about his danger, anxiety for his safety will arise in his mind. He will be "poor in *spirit*," and look out for relief in the same word that proclaims his *miserable* condition. He resolves and breaks his resolution. He strives against sin, which only convinces him that he is as *weak*, as he is *wicked*. At length, after labouring in *vain*, and spending his strength for *nought*, he sees himself *viler*, and feels himself *weaker;* confessing himself a *sinner—nothing but* a sinner, the chief of sinners—having *nothing* to *pay*, nothing to *plead*, falls on his knees, and from the depth of a *broken* heart—Behold! he PRAYETH!—"God be MERCIFUL to me, a sinner!" and (*merciful* God!) a broken and a contrite heart, *thou* wilt not *despise*."

Peter said to Jesus, "We believe, and are *sure*, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"—John vi. 69. Here was *assurance;* of what? Not an assurance to say, "Christ is mine, pardon is mine, heaven is mine." No: but that Christ was the true Messiah. They compared his person, temper, conduct, and miracles, with *prophecies;* and, by overpowering evidence, they were *fully persuaded*, that he was the Christ. Thousands, and tens of thousands, may have a *full assurance* of this truth (as devils have) and yet have no assurance of *their interest* in Christ. Again, what is Mr. H.'s meaning of the words *faith* and *assurance*. In Rom. iv. 21, it is said:—Abraham "was *fully persuaded*, that what God had promised he was able to perform." *What* was he fully assured of? He was an old man;—Sarah was past child-bearing; yet God *promised* him a son by *her*. He *believed*, steadily believed

that God was *able* to fulfil his word against all apparent impossibilities: he was *fully persuaded* of this, "being *strong* in the faith, he staggered not at," or disputed the truth of, "the promise through unbelief." But this passage proves not that faith in the truth of God, and assurance of the favour of God, are one thing, but *two*, entirely distinct from each other. A person might have faith in the *power* and *truth* of God, such as would remove mountains, and yet not have an *assurance* of the divine favour, nor that favour itself—1 Cor. xiii. 2. Many sincere, though weak Christians, have a *full assurance* of the power of God, to grant them any blessing they need, who yet have *no* assurance of the *love* of God towards them.

On this subject Mr. H. writes confusedly. He does not distinguish between my *faith* in the *truth* of a promise, and *assurance* of my *interest* in the *blessing* promised. I may believe the promise *true*, and yet not be assured it is made to *me*. Yea, I may, for a long time, even through life, have many strong and trying *doubts* about the latter. I may believe that there is a house—a house in *heaven* —a house *not made with hands*—a house eternal in the heavens—2 Cor. v. 1, 2. I may believe in the *reality* of its *existence*, the *glory* of its *nature*, the *eternity* of its *duration*, and that all believers shall enjoy it, and still not be assured it is mine! You and I, dear Madam, may believe these things of it, and yet not be able to say, with the assurance of Paul, and many of the Corinthians, "*We* have a house; we *know* that we have a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." I may believe that Christ is the true God; that his *righteousness* is *perfect*; that his grace is rich, and sufficient to save the chief of sinners. In *consequence* of this faith, I may commit my soul to him in humble prayer, and trust it with him in humble hope; and if so, I possess *faith*:—"true, genuine, *saving* faith;" but still I may not be able to say, with Thomas, "*My* Lord and *my* God!" John xx. 28. The *former* is faith in the divine report; the *latter* is *assurance* that Christ is *mine!* I may believe that Christ is a Redeemer, an *all-sufficient*, and every way a *suitable* Redeemer; I may believe that I *need* him as *such*, and apply to him, rely on him, and walk humbly with him, in consequence of the belief of these things; this is *faith*, true faith: but to say, with Job, xix. 25, "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth;" this is *assurance*, and is not founded simply on the testimony of God in his word, as faith is, but *on my own experience* of a work of sanctification in my heart.

Mr. H. quotes this passage of Job's experience, and what does it *prove*? Not that faith and *assurance* are the same; not that it cannot have a being without assurance. Not that *every* believer, half of them, or even a third part of them, attain to assurance in this life:—no; but it proves that *Job* was then possessed of an assurance, a truth which *nobody* denies. How many Christians believe that God is independently happy; that he is the *portion* of his people, and spiritually long to know that he is *their* portion, who cannot join with David, saying, "He is *my* portion for ever!" Ps. lxxiii. 26. Such Christians have faith in God's *word*; but no *assurance* of their interest in God's *favour*.

The Apostle wrote to the believing Hebrews, who were "*holy* brethren, and partakers of the *heavenly calling*." Heb. iii. 1. Most of them were *babes* in knowledge and experience, Heb. v. 12—14. They had faith, though no assurance of it: but he wishes them to shake off *slothfulness*, diligently to *seek* and pursue the full assurance of hope unto the end, Heb. vi. 11, 12. The Apostle Peter writes to those who were begotten to a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3; kept by *faith* in the power of God, verse 5. Who possessed precious faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour, 2 Pet. i. 1; who were the *elect*, 1 Pet. i. 2: but did not *know* it. They had faith, *precious* faith; the faith of God's elect; faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour, but not *assurance*. They did not, could not, say Christ is mine! pardon is mine! grace and all spiritual blessings are mine! No; they were not *sure of this*. Hear the exhortation to them, 2 Pet. i. 10—"Wherefore, the rather give *diligence* to make your calling and election *sure*." This proves, FIRST, that, though possessed of faith, they did not possess *assurance*; they were not *sure*, that they were elect. SECONDLY, that they must be *sure* they were *converted*, or *called*, before they could prove their *election*, or that Christ was their's, pardon their's, and heaven their's. And, THIRDLY, that if they would ever arrive at the point of assurance, they must be diligent in the pursuit of it, by pursuing a greater *evidence* of a work of sanctification in their souls, as the preceding verses prove.

Faith in Christ, is essential to salvation; but assurance is not. Faith respects the *truth* of the *promise*; *assurance* relates to a *knowledge* of *my interest* in the *blessing* promised. Faith will exist without assurance; but assurance cannot exist without faith. Faith rests on the *word* of God, simply; but assurance particularly

relates to my *experience* of the saving operations of the Spirit. He who possesses faith, is *safe*; he who has assurance, is *happy*.

Theron, therefore, was perfectly right (Dialogue xvii. page 411); on 1 John v. 13. They were believers, but they had not *assurance*. They had a title to eternal life, but did not know it. St. John says, "I write to you, that you *may* know" it. How plain, positive, and strong a proof is this, that faith may be possessed without assurance; and, therefore, that they are two distinct things. And mark *Aspasio's* answer. His confidence wavers about his doctrine. This text staggers him. He is all supposition. He dare not, in the face of this Scripture, *assert*. No; but says, "Is it certain?" "I *imagine* the privilege and comfort *should* go together. We *should* be persuaded that he has paid our debts—we *should* rest assured." This is all true; assurance is a *comfortable* thing—believers long for it; but this does not prove they *have* it; or that those believers to whom St. John wrote had it; but the above text is a clear, strong proof that they had it not. It proves that all believers have not assurance. It is attainable, highly desirable, diligently to be sought, by all who believe on the name of the Son of God; that is, who believe what the Scriptures declare concerning Christ; for *they* record what God says of his Son, for us to believe.

In Dialogue xvii page 414, Mr. H. is extremely wrong. Pray, dear Madam, read the whole account in the Evangelists. The disciples said that Christ was risen from the dead; Thomas did not believe it, declared he would not, unless he could see and feel him. Christ *appears*, and knowing what Thomas had said, though *absent*, surprises him by using his own words, and offering him his own desired evidence; tells him not to be faithless (that is, doubtful about his *resurrection*); but believing, like the other disciples. Surprised at Christ's knowledge of his rash resolve, charmed with his condescending goodness, perfectly convinced that it was Christ, he exclaimed, with a transport of delight, "My Lord, and my God!" "Thou hast seen me and believed," said Jesus. Believed what?—That Christ was his Lord? No: he had expressed no doubt about this; but that Christ was risen from the dead! This is what Christ *then* called *believing*.

You will not, I believe, suspect me for an enemy to the doctrine of assurance, by what I have written, or may yet write, upon the subject. No: I did, for upwards of two years, long, pray, wait for,

and expect this very important favour. Yet if ever I was a believer in Jesus, I am sure it was then, when I would have given my life for assurance. May a gracious God shine away all our suspicions of his truth, and give us substantial evidence of our interest in his favour, which is better than life.

I remain,

With sincerity of respect and affection, your Son,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER VI.—TO MRS. SHROPSHIRE.

(*On the same Subject.*)

Dear Madam,

IN a former letter, I considered faith, as it respected our *condition* before God, in the womb, infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. I produced some Scripture testimonies of the *state*, temper, actions, and *desert* of mankind; and the *effects* such a faith, in these declarations of God, must necessarily bring forth. I left the lost soul in conviction of his real state and danger, filled with *self-despair*, looking without himself for *relief*. Now I shall suggest a hint or two respecting faith, as it relates to the ENCOURAGING testimonies of the Bible. As, for instance: a soul, in the circumstances I have described, enters a place of worship, hears a minister, describe his state, and breathe forth our Lord's winning invitation. Matt. xi. 27, 28. "*All* power is given unto me, in *Heaven* and in *Earth*." Matt. xxviii. 18. Power—power on earth—*all* power on earth. Yea *more*, power in *Heaven*—ALL power in Heaven and earth is given to *me!* A person of such glory, power and authority, appears every way equal to grant *any* blessing, in Heaven and earth to render a ruined and needy soul *happy*.—Here, his *ability* to help the soul appears. The soul *believes* in his sufficiency, because he has a *divine*, and therefore *infallible* testimony. But, here, too many comfortless Christians long *rest*. They believe; they heartily believe that Jesus is *able* to save to the *uttermost*. And what is the *effect* of this belief? Believing him able, they, in consequence *rely*, *lean*, *trust*, or hope in his sufficiency. They have no other hope, they renounce their own *wisdom*,

strength, and *works*, in point of *dependence*. They utterly disclaim all ideas of *merit* in themselves, or the works of their hands; and say, "there is no *other* name, under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." They *allow* themselves in no sin, though they *painfully* feel many *unhallowed* ones within them. They constantly attend the respective duties of their callings, and the ordinances of God; and, in short, desire to "follow the Lord *fully*. But still, they cry (far from having an *assurance* of their *interest in Christ!*) O, that I could but believe him as *willing* as he is able. Then, I should "walk at liberty." But, alas! I feel my weakness. Lord! I believe thy *power* is able, O, help my unbelief: for still I feel a thousand doubts about thy *willingness*.—We might address them in the language of affectionate rebuke; "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" They have not a strong faith, much less *assurance*. No, no! 'tis time they had faith; though but *little*.

Now, there is every reason to believe that, one congregation with another, *three parts* of Christians in each, are of this description. They walk on, with doubts, fears, and struggles against unbelief all their days, *safe* as others; but not so *happy*. *Ask* them, if they have an assurance, that Christ is their Saviour? Oh! no:—no, I would give the world for it, if I had the world to give. They are far, very far from "having an assured persuasion of God's present favour, and their own final happiness," as you indicate of the holy men of old. To say with Mr. Hervey, that their *assurance* of personal interest in Christ, is "liable to assaults both from outward temptation and inward corruption." To say that, "for a *while*, its vigour is impaired, and its *lustre* eclipsed: but its *being* not DESTROYED;" is, speaking inconsistently; for the above description of Christians, do not POSSESS this assurance. It has not a BEING in them to be attacked, eclipsed, impaired, or destroyed. And Mr. Hervey's saying, that an appropriating persuasion, or, an ASSURANCE of salvation by Christ, is the sure, genuine, adequate nature of *faith*; is, in other words, to say, that ten thousand Christians, or three parts of them, are not possessed of *faith*; because they are destitute of *assurance*. Thousands of Christians who possess "true and genuine faith," are, and have been for years, longing, praying, and waiting for this *assurance* of their interest in Christ: but have not yet *obtained* it.

And yet, they cannot possibly be in possession even of *faith*, if Mr. Hervey is right; because he makes ASSURANCE of the *essence* of faith; which *assurance* they have not.

Tens of thousands of Christians believe, Christ an *able* saviour, and can say, year after year, "Lord if thou *wilt*, thou *canst* save me." But all these Christians, all these years, have no faith at all, if *assurance*, enters into the very *essence* of faith!—an assurance that Christ is mine! They believe him *able:* but are not *assured* that he is *willing*—much less, *assured* of their salvation by him. They have *little* faith in his power; less, in his *willingness* to save: but no *assurance* at all, that they *are interested* in his love and salvation.

But there are thousands who go much further than these, who, nevertheless, have not *assurance*. They hear of, and believe in Christ's *power* to save, and also attend to his *invitation* "Come unto *me—all* ye, that *labour* and are *heavy laden*," and also to his *promise*, "and I will give you *rest*." They *meditate* on these consolotary truths. Ah, say they, how happy the soul, that comes to Jesus and obtains *rest!* They *believe* in a *wavering* manner, that if they come, he is willing to save them; but when they go to him, in fervent, repeated, and unfeigned prayer, they *stagger* at the promise, through remaining unbelief, and whilst they rely wholly on Christ alone, for rest and salvation, entertain a hope that he is their Saviour—find *comfort* more or less, from this hope; still—still they are far, very far, from *assurance!* "Christ is theirs—grace is theirs—Heaven is theirs:" but they do not *know* it. They are not *assured* of either—and, therefore, they cannot *say* so in Mr. Hervey's *appropriating* language. It is one thing, to *have* eternal life; and another to *know* that I have eternal life. 1 John, v. 13. Saint John wrote to them that *believed* on the Son of God, that they might have an *assurance* of their interest in him, and of eternal life through him. Many who *profess* to have it, prove the *contrary*, among other ways, by never blessing for assurance, in social prayer. Is it not a blessing of unspeakable magnitude? Would it not influence the heart to *gratitude*, if it were really possessed?—And it is no contemptible manner of knowing, whether I possess it, if, when I solemnly address the Lord in *secret*, after impartial deliberation, I can lift up my heart in general, and say, 'O *my* God, I thank thee, that notwithstanding thousands of Christians are destitute of assurance, *I* possess it. I am *sure*, that I am one of

thine elect—that Christ died for *me* in particular—that I am savingly converted to thee!' If many were to *try* their assurance thus, they would *faulter*—fear to go on; lest they should bless God for what they never had, and so, *deceive* themselves.

What you have quoted from Mr. Hervey's note, (nay, even that note contradicts itself,) overthrows his own former assertion, viz. that assurance is of the ESSENCE of faith—that is, that faith cannot have a *being*, without assurance; for, he says "this assurance, we allow, may be encountered with *doubts*, and conflict with *fears*, but still, it is assurance, *real* assurance." What! I am *assured* that I am interested in Christ; but I *doubt* whether, I am, or not. I am *assured*, that Christ is mine; but I *fear* he is not! Can you bring these contraries together, dear madam? If so, I will thank you to do it; for, I must own, that *I* can as soon bring the north and south poles together! By this concession, Mr. Hervey overturns all he has been writing about truth: because he mentions, that *assurance* enters into the very *being* of faith.

But he goes on and says, "It is assurance, *real* assurance, and *proves* itself to be such, by opposing, and struggling, with the contrary principle." Here, he brings *proof*; but what does this amount to? Why, that doubts, and fears, that I am *not* interested in Christ; meet with opposition from my assurance that I am interested in him, and hence arises much "*struggling*." This certainly *proves*, as Mr. Hervey says, but what? Not that such a soul has assurance, that Christ, pardon, and Heaven belong to it; but that it has no such thing. I doubts whether they are; it fears, they are *not* its own. Observe, he says, "*it*," that is assurance, "struggles, with its CONTRARY principle." What does Mr. Hervey mean, by *contrary principle?* Can any soul have assurance, and *not* have it, at the same time? Mr. Hervey supposes it can. Does he mean *unbelief*, by the contrary principle? But *unbelief* does not directly stand opposed to *assurance*, that Christ is mine; but to *faith* in what *God says*.—But when the soul finds faith and unbelief, hope and fear conflicting within, it certainly proves the *want* of assurance, for which such a soul is praying, waiting, and struggling. In short, I may *believe* Christ is able;—and *hope* he is *willing* to save me; and yet, not be SURE, that he *has* done it. I may believe there is pardon in Christ; I may *depend* on, and pray to him for it; and yet not be sure that pardon *is* mine;—or that I am pardoned. I may believe, that he has *all spiritual blessings* to communicate, to every believer; I may long

wait and pray for them, and yet not be *sure* that I am a believer, and that they are all *mine*;—I may believe there is a heaven—freely given—through Christ; earnestly *desire* it; long to be *prepared* for it; hope to obtain it; and yet not be *sure*, that heaven is mine.

I must conclude this letter, by wishing, not only that Christ, pardon, and heaven may be *yours;* but that you may have an *assurance* that they are, and that my dear Mary may enjoy the same with

Your most affectionate Son,
JOHN COOKE.

LETTER VII.—TO A CLERGYMAN.

(On Baptism.)

Dear Sir, September 7, 1789.

PERMIT me to transmit a letter to you on the subject of baptism; of which, in the sermon you sent me for my instruction, you thus write: "all who embrace the faith of the Redeemer of the world, are required to be baptized, under the pain of forfeiting the benefit of redemption." That is, in other words, he that believeth and is not baptized, shall be damned. Surely, Sir, you are under a mistake here, of considerable magnitude. "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The *Scriptures* do not assert, that all who embrace the faith, and die unbaptized, shall be damned, or excluded from the enjoyment of the benefits of redemption. Your quotation of Mark xvi. 16, proves no such thing, as you have written. As to the other text, John iii. 5, it does not even *mention* baptism, much less prove it essential to the salvation of every believer. You further write, "all its *efficacy*, which in Scripture is said to be nothing less than the remission of sins, &c." *No*, Sir, do not mistake, 'tis not so written in the *Scriptures of Truth*, but in *Dr. B.'s Sermon*, and sermons of the same features. Was not Simon Magus baptized?—Was the efficacy of baptism nothing less than the remission of sins to him? Was he not in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, even *after* his baptism? And does not this prove baptism to have no such efficacy? Ah! how many

popular errors are sanctioned by dignified titles! The penitent thief was saved *without* baptism, while Simon Magus was left in his sins *with it*, like thousands more. But whence has baptism all this *efficacy?* You reply, "it is derived from the positive institution." Indeed! I had been taught by the Scriptures of truth, a very *different* doctrine. *They* tell me that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." And that, "in Christ, believers have redemption through *his blood*, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus, Sir, you rob Jesus Christ of the merit of his atonement, which possesses the efficacy which you have erroneously attributed to baptism.

But you go on to observe, that "this efficacy can accompany the external rite, only when that rite is administered in the manner prescribed, and by the persons authorised to administer it." The manner prescribed by whom? Doubtless, you mean by Christ, the *only* lawgiver, in his church. What! has *Christ* prescribed the manner in which Dr. B. baptizes a child? Has *Christ* prescribed the sign of the cross in baptism? Has Christ prescribed, that two godfathers and one godmother shall stand engaged as sureties for every male child in baptism? And one godfather and two godmothers for every female? Is it of Christ's prescribing, that the parents of the child (though certainly, the most proper persons to stand engaged for them), shall be *excluded?* *Seriously* reflect, dear Sir—did Christ, or human pride and superstition prescribe all these incumbrances to his ordinance? And yet you say, "the efficacy of baptism, which is nothing less than the remission of sins, accompanies it, *only* when administered, in the manner *prescribed*." Allowing, therefore, that baptism had such an efficacy, when administered as Christ prescribed, you *deprive* the subject of that remission, by departing from *his prescribed* form.

Your form of thanksgiving on the occasion, though of a piece with your sermon, is pregnant with vast absurdities. "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy holy Spirit." How do you *know* that God's Spirit hath regenerated the child? Have you the gift of discerning its spirit and state? And how dare even a Doctor of Divinity, presumptuously thank God, for *any* infant, much less, for *every* one baptized, that he has regenerated them all by his holy Spirit? Did Christ prescribe *this* manner of administering baptism? Did Christ authorise you to do and say this? *No*, Sir,

you must go back, to that "whore of Babylon," the church of Rome, for your authority and prescription. And how, in the name of the Dissenters, of common sense, and of Christ—how will you answer your *judge*, or your *conscience*, when either, or both, shall interrogate you thus, "who hath required *these* things at *your* hands?" What unscriptural, what dangerous sentiments are instilled into the minds of children, on this subject, when they are taught their Catechism! In their baptism, they are *taught* to say, "I was made a member of Christ! a child of God! and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven!" You, Sir, have subscribed to this. And do you indeed believe;—*Can* you possibly believe it true, when you see very many of the same beings, advanced in life—whoremongers—drunkards—swearers—sabbath-breakers—riotous—and enemies to God by wicked works? Can you tell these creatures, with every member of the church of England hanged at Tyburn, that each of them is a member of Christ—a child of God? And has not Dr. B. baptized many children, to whom he might *now* say, "ye are of your father the devil, and his works ye do?" Consider your own situation, Sir;—what numbers there are in your own parish who go to no place of worship—consider the thinness of your congregation on a Sabbath-day, and the numbers that haunt the ale-houses *every* day, and say, do not they love the ale-house better than their church? and sinful discourse, better than your sermons? And pray, do these things prove, or allow us to think, that they are members of Christ, and children of God! No, surely! Have they not been taught to believe a lie then, in their Catechism?

Thus, Sir, whilst the Dissenter administers this ordinance, according to the simplicity of the institution, Dr. B., who despises him, obscures it by many superstitious, ridiculous and Popish additions. You would have received this before, but I heard that you were going to London.

Surely, I need not offer an apology to you, as you have, unprovoked, so freely censured my conduct, as a Dissenter, both by your tongue and your pen. Had you sent me your sermon in *print*, I would have answered it in print. As it is, it may please a Lord-Bishop—but who can think this was *your* aim in it? But if you wish to *be* a Bishop, (and even such a thought may be in your breast) I wonder not, that you should first attempt to please one. However, death

will soon level all earthly distinctions, and judgment regulate all unjust decisions, by a Doctor of Divinity, against, your's, with best wishes,

JOHN COOKE.

Maidenhead, September 7th, 1789.

LETTER VIII.—TO A YOUNG MAN UNDER CONVICTION, HARDNESS OF HEART, AND DISTRESS OF MIND, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS SOUL.

Dear Sir, March, 1792.

YOUR mother has showed me a letter from you, which describes your mind to be in a state of inexpressible distress, in relation to your soul. It cannot be thought that so entire a stranger as I am to you, and to the *cause* of your misery, can write a full and proper answer to your case; but, in compliance with your mother's desire, I write the following lines. Your pain of mind may arise from the *guilt* or *power* of sin, or *both*. If your conviction of sin is the fruit of electing love, and produced by the spirit of God, you will be profitably affected with the *magnitude* and *multitude* of your sins; with the *nature* and *aggravations* of your sins, as well as the *consequences* of them. You will feelingly say, "sin has abounded!" in Adam—in all mankind—in *myself;* abounded in childhood and youth, in every *condition*, and in every *relation*. If your pain springs from the *guilt* of sin, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, endeavour to exercise faith in the following Scriptures. Exod. xxxiv. 6, "Jehovah God, gracious and merciful." If this is God's real character, he is "the God of hope;" and if you *credit* this testimony, you will have joy and peace in believing. Peace will never flow into the conscience, by any other way than by *believing*. Many reason, pray, and confess; complain, hear, and read; watch and fast, who never BELIEVE, and therefore remain miserable. The atonement of Christ is *perfect*, for his blood cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7. He has *by himself purged* our sins (Heb. i. 3), and through the satisfaction of the Divine Saviour, God is faithful and just to *forgive* the believing sinner, 1 John i. 9. And if you believe in the

dignity of Christ's person, the *perfection* of his *righteousness*, and the *prevalency* of his *intercession*, your *conscience* will be purged from guilt and dead works, Heb. ix. 14. The resurrection of Christ manifested the acceptableness of Christ's person, obedience, and sufferings, to God the *Father;* and through him is preached unto *you* the FORGIVENESS of sin. He *punished* sin fully in the suffering surety; and pardons it fully in the penitent and believing sinner, Acts xiii. 34. Thus Christ is exalted as a *sufficient* Saviour; the law is magnified; justice is satisfied; sin is punished; the sinner is pardoned and justified, and God's wisdom and love, holiness and grace, appear harmonious and honourable.

Against all I have written, you may easily oppose many things, and exclaim, Ah! wretched man that I am; the sins of my heart and life oppress my spirit, and constrain me to fear that my sins are too many, too great, too often repeated, or too aggravated, to be forgiven. But *who* says they are? Remember, that *unbelief* and *despair* are as truly damning sins as *presumption*. Beware of believing Satan, who is a liar, whilst you disbelieve the "God who cannot lie." Do not limit or set bounds to God's mercy. You complain of a hard heart, and be assured, if you *think* God is hard hearted, you will *be* so. It is not the *power* of God merely that *softens* the heart, but a believing view of this truth. In Christ we have redemption through his blood, even the *forgiveness* of sins, Eph. i. 7. Believe this and your heart will force your tongue to utter the truth, which has eased my soul a thousand times, when I have gone to the throne of grace, looked up to God, and in faith, cried, "If thou shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who can stand? but there is *forgiveness* with thee? Forgiveness, *forgiveness* will melt the heart. To oppose the imperfection of your duties to these encouraging truths, is *self-righteousness*, not humility. To stagger at the promise of pardon, because you are *unworthy*, is a proof that pride and unbelief are indulged. Christ's atonement is finished: finished for the *unworthy*, and *only* for the unworthy. Perhaps your discouragement arises from *indwelling sin;* but if sin does not rule, it shall not ruin you. If it is *in* you, and struggles for victory; yet if you abhor it, oppose it by faith, prayer, and a spiritual watch, and cleave to Christ, as a Saviour from its punishment and power; you will find his compassion and grace sufficient for you. This is a cross

for life; but the conflict is short, and the victory sure. Believe that God in Christ Jesus is love.

Read the Bible much; it is "the word of faith," and faith cannot grow without it. Hear those Ministers who preach the gospel in the spirit of the gospel. Shun carnal company and conversation. Watch against temptations to your besetting sin. Look to the Divinity and offices of Christ in every duty: and through his intercession pray much for the Holy Spirit, and depend on his power and grace. Are you dark in your views of God's good-will to sinners in Christ? He is "the Spirit of knowledge." Are you weak? He is "the Spirit of might." Are you distressed? He is "the comforter." Are you in bondage? "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Are you *unworthy*? He is the Spirit of *Grace?* "Such may you find him, and as such may you seek him with," Your's affectionately,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER IX.—TO THE REV. CORNELIUS WINTER.

(On Ministerial Temptations.)

My Dear Brother, Maidenhead, Berks, March, 179?.

IF ever there was a season of temptation appointed for me, the last three weeks of my life has been that season. In times past, I have been fiercely attacked with temptations to Deism and Atheism; one immediately succeeding the other. This conflict lasted about six weeks, and ended in my greater confirmation and joy. Indeed, I hold no truth, essential to my peace, but by a believing contention for it. The wisdom of God in these trials, I soon saw and admired, as they cured me of a rebellious pity for fallen angels, which I had long felt, with pain. The present one, I verily believe, will constrain me to acknowledge it was good for me, that I was tempted. Previous to this trial, I have for a considerable length of time, enjoyed a happy freedom from the disturbing suggestions of the grand enemy, and (unstable creature!) have been insensibly led to suppose that Satan had much less influence on men than I

had imagined. This was judging by sense, not by faith. Fearing an imputation of that to Satan, which originated merely in my own depraved reason and passions; and observing how convenient many professors found a devil to charge their sins upon; my mind was gone to another extreme. And when in those undisturbed moments, I have been reading a passage of Scripture which relates to Satan; a query has started, "how do you know but this is a figure of speech, and means no more than a Satan of thy own heart? The wisest of men, have explained such parts of Scripture agreeably to reason; and suppose the words, Satan and Devil, mean, the evil propensities of the human heart, which are, most certainly, the great adversaries of man."

Depraved reason has farther inquired, "how can it be consistent with the goodness of God, to suffer such a monster of sin and cruelty, as Satan is, with such formidable advantages, and ages of experience of human weakness, to assault and harass a creature, already oppressed with its own darkness, guilt, and weakness? A creature too, who, believing in his son, with integrity, frequency and importunity, approaches his throne, crying, "Lord! help me?" Can such a creature be an object of the Father's love, the purchase of the Son's blood and the temple of the Holy Ghost? If so favoured, "why am I thus?" Why thus sifted with temptation so painful, so repeated, so perilous? How unequal the contest! how mysterious the dispensation! and how certain my fall, without supernatural aid? "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. When I thought to *know* this, it was too painful for me." But surely! "the only wise God," must have a *design* in such trials; a design worthy of himself; since "he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

Such trials are, in their issue, highly interesting to the Christian. They teach him the meaning of the "power of Satan," from which he is delivered. The word *redemption* is partly opened by such experience of diabolic artifice and cruelty. The minister of God, and the private Christian, must learn the heart of the tempted in *this* world, if at all. In hell, Satan will never see the Christian; and in heaven, the believer will never behold Satan. In *this* world the short conflict must be endured, and the benefit obtained. Consolatory thought! this day may end the contest, and I may be with Christ in paradise. Satan knows,

and so does the Christian, that "his time is short." God shall bruise him under my feet *shortly*. This world is the *only* place where I shall be within reach of "the fiery darts of the devil." Little does our common adversary imagine, how much he promotes *self-knowledge* in the Christian, and teaches him the evil and bitterness of sin, and how much he is taught to sympathize with, and succour those who know the same devices of the wicked one. When a temptation is addressed to the judgment, we are, in most instances, less liable to mistake the hand of Satan for our own natural inclination.

If the object of temptation is proposed for the gratification of *carnal affections*; Satan may propose, insinuate, inflame and draw away the heart from God, while the Christian cannot perceive any thing but the impulse of corrupt passions. But when he is tempted to doubt the truth of any doctrine which he esteems essential to his happiness; while he reads, believes, contends, watches and prays against the temptation, and yet finds it follows, wounds and harasses his mind, he can easily discern, and sensibly feel, the force of diabolic agency. Such a temptation may prevent many others; for whilst the mind struggles for the possession and enjoyment of objects which are connected with the most dear and lasting interests of the soul, the thoughts are confined and carnal affections are damped. And, indeed, such onsets have a tendency to prevent a disposition to carnal reasoning, by discovering the pain and danger which attend it. Far from being injurious to the Christian, by temptation he is "withheld from sinning against God." It scourges a believer for lukewarmness, and is a means of removing it. It rouses him to a sense of danger, duty and interest. His self-confidence is checked, and his pride is abated. He learns like Hezekiah, what is in his heart, and *trusts* it less. He suspects himself, suspects Satan, feels the necessity of being "kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation;" of being strong in the *Lord*, and in the power of *his* might."

The relief a Christian obtains in a season of temptation, manifests and magnifies the compassion and power of the Redeemer: he once sustained the insolent and repeated attacks of Satan, till he had "ended all his temptations." And being in our nature "tempted in all points like as we are, he is able to *succour* them that are tempted." The malice of Satan compels the believer to put the Saviour's ability and tenderness to the proof. He tries them, and finds his words still

true, "my grace is sufficient for thee." Indeed, such is the wisdom of God, that one temptation shall prevent or remove several others. In times past, I have had queries about the existence of Satan; queries, however, which I always abhorred and opposed; but when I felt his *agency*, the thought vanished, of course. And if a doubt should arise, relative to the reality or efficacy of Christ's intercession, or the believer's interest in it—how confirming is an *experience* of his prevailing pleas, on receiving the *fruit* of them, in answer to prayer! When faith has "entered within the veil," and fixed upon the soul's "advocate with the Father," and from the believing view obtains a deliverance from the gloom of temptation, and the uncertainty of mind which attends it;—receives the "spirit of might," with wisdom and ability to "resist Satan steadfast in the faith," vanquish his sophistical arguments, being "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;"—then he goes from the throne, blessed by his "great High Priest," with ease and establishment of soul; and can say without wavering, "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make *intercession* for them." What must Peter think, when restored, of Christ's pleading for him, when he foresaw his trial, and prayed for him, that his faith might not fail? How encouraging the words! not I *will* pray for thee, when the temptation comes; but foreseeing thy weakness and danger, "I *have* prayed for thee," before the trial comes.

Closely connected with, and the gracious fruit of, the Redeemer's intercession, is the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit in a Christian. But the thought arises, "how do you know that your joys and strength did not originate in your own mere considerations of God, of your privileges and prospects? Exertions of reason, a watchful spirit, and a diligent discharge of religious duties, may have worked up your imagination, and warmed your passions, and led you to draw the self-flattering inference—"I am assisted by the Holy Ghost! To conquer this temptation, I have been exercised with another. Satan has attacked me on the mysteries or apparent contradictions of Scripture; the seeming obscurity and confusion of providence, and its opposition to the promises of God. My feeble soul has reasoned and contended with the difficulties, until my understanding was perplexed, and my reason confounded. Under a sense of misery and weakness, I have applied to the "throne of grace," owned my inability to obtain a victory, mourned over my past happy

days, as if born to be miserable in future. Now my former vain thoughts have occurred to me, and I have said to myself, why do you not confirm your own faith, and strengthen your own soul, by reading, meditation and prayer, and work yourself into a comfortable frame? Mistaken soul! I have meditated, read and prayed; prayed, read, and meditated; but still, all was darkness, weakness and discouragement. I have seen and owned my mistake, implored a return of my former views, strength and peace; I have received it, and exclaimed with confirmed faith, in the truth and grace of the Holy Spirit's office; as well as with confirmed joy and gratitude, "God hath not given me the spirit of fear, but of *power*, of love, and of a *sound mind!*

Thus "out of weakness the Christian is made strong, waxes valiant in fight," by the strength of him who, to encourage and humble the conquering saint, says, "*I* have kept thee from the power of temptation."—And can Satan gain by such temptations? No; disappointed enemy! how does the wisdom and love of God to his people, shine forth, in making such feeble creatures conquer thy temptations, defeat thy purposes, and triumph over thy power and pride! how evidently does "the only wise God display and honour his own perfections, fulfil his promises, exalt his son, and glorify "the spirit of grace," by bruising thy head, O Satan! *for* his saints, in his saints, and *by* them!—The believer often doubts the reality of his conversion, until he perceives that he stands against those temptations which occasion others to "fall away, Luke viii. 13; but finding that "as his day, so his strength is," he comprehends with all saints, the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of grace and supplication, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of holiness and consolation. The painful doubt gives way to steadier confidence that he shall "hold on his way, with clean hands, and wax stronger and stronger." Thus the believer, "blessed man! endures temptation," which weans him from *this* world, while he patiently waits for the "crown of life," in the prospect of which he sings,

"My inward foes shall all be slain;
Nor *Satan* break my peace again!"

And now my dear friend, can you forgive my delay in writing to you, which has been occasioned by illness, visiters, and absence from home, a week in London? Yes, you can, and do forgive me, and thereby act the friend you describe, in your agreeable and edify-

ing letter. My heart rejoices in your success. Go on, man of God! go on preaching where called, in season and out of season; and, merciful God! give "the increase." My dear wife and family are well. She unites in love with Mr. and Mrs. —— and your affectionate brother, JOHN COOKE.

LETTER X.—TO THE REV. CORNELIUS WINTER.

On the Influence of Reason.

Dear Brother, Maidenhead, June 1792.

THE difficulty of reconciling the duty and advantage of prayer, with God's decrees, you observe, "is not the least you meet with in your Christian race." The subject has often occurred to my mind, as interesting, for if viewed improperly, it may be productive of indolence, rebellion and misery. You observe your "reason" suggested this difficulty. Unbelief and carnal reasoning are nearly allied, and are principles destructive of our peace, because tending to violate our obligations to God. There is a sad propensity in all men to "lean to their own understandings." I observe it in others, and abhor it in myself. Ignorance is no prevention of this disposition; but rather promotes it. This pride of understanding discovers itself, in attempting to explore things, far beyond its reach, and to account for things which, are "past finding out." This self-sufficiency, scorns to be confined within the regions of *revealed truth*, and to acquire knowledge by a patient attention, and diligent search into that volume, which is "the well-spring of wisdom." Pride is curious and prying: it hates confinement. Curiosity breeds discontent with our present circumstances, and God's appointed method for our becoming wise. It grieves to find bounds set to its views, and in spite of every right consideration, excites vain desires and deceitful hopes, which urge the soul to sinful endeavours. Here presumption, defying danger, rushes into temptation. It hears any man, and reads any book which promises gratification, and says "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Thus pride of knowledge, and carnal reasoning, lead the soul to determine upon every thing with which it meets. Whatever

relates to the Godhead, the mysteries of Scripture or Providence, the soul attempts by this principle of depraved reason, to examine and settle. It ventures to announce the immediate cause of the mercies which gladden one, and the afflictions which sadden another man. Why this man is rich, and that man poor; why this man is tempted, and that believer enjoys undisturbed tranquillity.—

But in nothing is this pride of understanding more apparent, especially in a professed Christian, than in a neglect of "the word of God." When I reflect on the darkness and weakness of the human mind, the little real knowledge we possess, the deceitfulness of the heart, the devices of Satan, and the apostacy of many from the grand doctrines of revelation, I ask myself, what but this pride of understanding can prevent a Christian from meditating in God's word day and night;--- from "binding God's word on his fingers, and esteeming and treating it as his kinswoman, his sister, and as the apple of his eye?" Prov. vii. 2. The language of this self-conceit is, "I am so well informed about my duty, my interest, and my temptations, and so well acquainted with God's word, that with very rare attention to "the oracles of God," I can see when others are in darkness; determine where another would stand in suspense, and stand, where others fall." Whereas, if a Christian felt as he should, this would be his language:—"So varying are my circumstances, so treacherous my heart, and accomplished my tempter; so imperfect are my duties, and so hidden my snares; so precious my soul, and so profound, extensive and momentous, the things which are revealed; that my head and heart should be in the Bible night and day. I must "bind it continually upon my heart, and tie God's word about my neck, that, when I walk, it may lead me; when I sleep, it may keep me; and when I wake, it may talk with me!" Prov. vi.

This good opinion of our own mental discernment, induces many Christians to pass their life without reading the Bible once through, or even all its plain and important parts. And many ministers of the gospel "lean more to their own understandings," in reading human authors; and to the understandings of those authors themselves, than to God's word; although it is "given by inspiration of God, and is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." That Christians (shall I add ministers?) should venture forward, to meet duties,

difficulties, and death, without an anxious, studious, and prayerful attention to God's word, manifests a self-sufficiency of understanding, in a very great degree indeed. And when men torture and twist many parts of God's word, to support a system of doctrines which their depraved reason has adopted; they are so sure they are right, that they will suspect the Bible, rather than their own sentiments. The Bible must submit to the decision of reason, where reason should learn, and Scripture teach. If a man of this disposition observes another person who follows either reason or Scripture, rather than *his* principles, he is too ready to charge the latter with weakness of understanding, indolence, partiality or obstinacy. "Ye shall be as God's," is a fascinating insinuation which still operates successfully on human minds which long for independence. The human mind would be independently wise; a principle which renders divine revelation unnecessary; independently happy, by self-devised methods; and independent of control, by any law but its own will.

To resemble God in holiness, is the glory of all intelligent creatures; but to wish to resemble him in uncontrolled sovereignty, and entire independence, is criminal beyond all expression, beyond all conception. To indulge this pride of reasoning, is a criminal reflection on the wisdom and goodness of God, in granting a revelation of all necessary and useful truth. Whatever is necessary for our duty and happiness, is clearly revealed.—But our anxious inquiries, curious speculations, bold conjectures, and laborious pursuits about things unrevealed, are a practical *denial* of the efficiency of the sacred Scriptures, for "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." We are prone to extremes in every thing, and therefore in this; willingly ignorant of what God has revealed, while eager in guessing at secret things. This disposition is not only sinful and foolish, but extremely *dangerous*. If we pursue knowledge in forbidden paths, we shall meet with error disguised, may receive it for truth, and prove ourselves "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Many obtaining knowledge this way, have repented of their acquisitions; for immediately "their eyes have been opened, to know good and evil." And 'tis a comfortless apology to exclaim, "the serpent beguiled me!"

Satan addresses our self-love with motives of *profit*. He *holds* out

promises, which our credulity as readily receives, as our infidelity rejects the promises of God. The devil is all promise, without evidence or fulfilment. Where God promises little, he gives much; where he promises much he gives more, but never less than he promised. How aggravated the sin, of "trusting to our own hearts," by which we are led to question the truth, deny the fulness, or forget the importance of things which belong to God. "If the truth is not our shield and buckler," carnal affections will reign, and call in carnal reason to justify the indulgence of them. This enemy of our peace—what exploits hath it done! It has denied the divinity of Christ, nullified his offices, and made him a mere man, and a bad one. It has confidently asserted that his atonement was unreasonable, unnecessary, and impossible. It has derided the doctrine of imputed righteousness, the influence of God's spirit on the human mind, and explained away the new birth. It has condemned election as a partial, cruel, horrid, gloomy doctrine; or explained it in consistency with human merit. It has denied the resurrection of the dead, the immortality of the soul, and the damnation of the wicked. It has declared rebellion against God, rather a pitiable weakness, than a crime. It has described God, as all mercy, and denied that he has any. It has worshipped a man, a beast, an insect, a devil. It has discovered a purgatory in hell; repentance and remission of sins, holiness and Heaven for the damned. It has led many to set up false signs of conversion to God, and so filled them with an assurance of their salvation without conversion. It has proposed the blood of Christ as the only ground of hope, and rendered his commands of none effect. In the love of sin, it has taught many to exclaim with tears of joy, "grace, grace; free, rich, sovereign, endless grace!" In relation to justification by faith, it hath zealously asserted that "Christ is all in all," but neglecting holiness of temper and conduct, has made him *nothing* in *any* one.

I thought we should have seen you some weeks past, and had published your name in our pulpit. Shall be happy to do it when the Lord so directs. I thank you for your letter, the subject of which gave me pleasure, and the season in which it came reproved my neglect of punctuality. But as you know my calls of duty in general, you can forgive me, and continue to be a pattern to me in this particular. The London and country papers have informed the

public that my dear wife is dead; but she was safely delivered on Saturday, June 2. Mother and child are as well as I can consistently wish them. "The Lord is good, and *doeth* good." May we covet a resemblance to him in being and doing good, in every way becoming our character and obligations. My dear Mary unites in love to you, and Mrs. Winter, with your's,

With cordial regard,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XI.—TO THE REV. J. GRIFFIN.

Maidenhead, August 19, 1792.

My dear Friend,

IN my last letter to you, I noticed the propensity of fallen man, to lean to the decisions of his own judgment, independent of, and contrary to, revealed truth; and that such a disposition was foolish, criminal, and dangerous. And I add, from reflections on the works of God, and the experience of my own heart, that such a disposition is *confounding*. Look at the animal part of the creation! why do they suffer such various, extensive, and continued miseries? Has the horse, the sheep, the bird, or the fish, offended God? Impossible. Do they suffer through the sin of man? Where is the goodness and equity of this constitution of things? This is confounding to sense and reason—it *should* be so. Here we must live by faith, and give God credit for the wisdom and justice of his proceedings; for at present, "he giveth not account of any *such* matters." Adam sins, and behold! countless millions perish in consequence of his one transgression; a whole world of men, women, children, and cattle, are deluged with a flood of waters! Legions of angels sinned, and were thrust down to hell, without a possibility of repentance and salvation! These invisible, malignant, knowing, and desperate spirits, are allowed access to fallen man, to seduce, torment, and destroy him! Why did a holy and almighty Being permit the fall of angels and of man? Why permit infants to endure such agonies in life and death? or punish a child for his parent's sin? Why should divine revelation be confined for thousands of years, to a little nation of Jews? and still be confined from so great a part of the known world? Why do the worst of men prosper,

as if the favourites of heaven; and the best of men suffer, as if the objects of divine displeasure? Why was the Saviour of the world born of the poorest parents, and in the meanest circumstances? Why did he live a mechanic, and die as a malefactor? Would our reason have laid such a plan? How can the son of a carpenter, who was born in a stable, who worked for his living, and died by crucifixion, be "the God of the whole earth?"

Reason! I ask you, why the object of God's love should be subject to indwelling sin for life? to defile, disturb, ensnare them, and dishonour God? Why are they suffered to be the sport of devils and the scorn of men? Why suffer miseries, which their friends, and some of their enemies, would remove and cannot; whilst God can and will not?

These questions have often risen in my mind; and sometimes perplexity and rebellion have been produced by them. Some, on reading these lines, would ask, "why mention these thoughts?" And I should answer by another question, viz. why *not* mention them? Am I the only one that ever found such confounding thoughts? If I could persuade myself so, I would conceal them. But "as face answereth to face in the water, so the heart of man to man." So the heart of John Griffin, to the heart of John Cooke. Yes, my brother, you have felt the same reasoning, and many of your hearers too, who may be hearing, and saying to themselves, surely! no child of God ever had such vile and puzzling thoughts of things as I have. If we appeal to *experience*, to what perplexity of soul has this principle of depraved reasoning reduced many persons? It has led them to stifle their convictions, by removing the hateful nature and terrible consequences of sin from their view; or it has overwhelmed the soul in despair, by suggesting their sins to be unpardonable.

The Christian in poverty of circumstances, affliction of body, bereaving providences, temptations from Satan, persecution from men, or conflicts with his own passions, has asked, is it reasonable to think that I am a child of God, and suffer thus? Do not these things prove that God has forgotten me? Is not my cause, my trial, passed over by my God? If I am a believer, why so poor, so painful, so dark and perplexed, so feeble and fearful? This is the language of sense and partial reason, and is truly distressing, in proportion to its prevalence in any mind. The wicked

are under the uninterrupted reign of this disposition; and, therefore, the words and ways of God appear to them dark, partial, unaccountable, and discouraging. They wonder, cavil, censure, and are tormented by what they cannot understand.

The above queries and observations upon reason, and on its operations in us, show the absolute necessity of living by faith. For, "whoso is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them;" (so far as his present duty and happiness are concerned); "for the ways of the Lord are right," whatever appearances they may wear; "and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein." They have not a principle of faith to oppose and conquer carnal reasoning; and are, in consequence, often led to stumble at the mysteries of revelation and Providence. Who can wonder, that under the conduct of corrupt reason and corrupt passions, "the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot *rest*, whose waters cast up mire and dirt?" Every creature must be dependent, and every happy creature must be willingly so.

When angels in heaven, and man in Eden, "leaned to their own understandings," their guilt and misery commenced. Here is one principal occasion for self-denial. Our own short, vain, confused views of things, must be renounced, and what God declares, must be embraced by faith, however unaccountable to our reason. It is impossible to enjoy peace, if we live by sense and carnal reason. God's declarations believed, satisfy the mind. But if a creature will not be contented with God's testimony, but account for every thing, and ask how?—why?—His understanding must be perplexed, his hopes disappointed, and his peace interrupted. He must suffer loss—the loss of time and labour; and, not unfrequently of his temper too. When once this truth is well fixed in the mind—(I write from experience), its advantages will be numerous and constant. For whenever the mind is beginning to launch forth into the wide ocean of speculation, the believer who has suffered by his presumption, will not go far from the shore of divine revelation, before he cries, "return unto thy rest, O my soul." He has been taught to cast down such reasonings (2 Cor. x. 5). A believer uses his reason to consider the words, connexion, sense, and scope of God's word, and is thankful to the Father of

lights for so important a blessing. But if he consults reason, independent of revealed truth, he may be sure that "God's thoughts are not as his thoughts." To receive, and retain, and be governed by God's thoughts of things, is living by faith, and the only way of expelling our own "vain thoughts." In proportion as our minds are influenced by the divine "testimonies," our views agree with God's, our dispositions and pursuits are obedient and heavenly, and our minds are the empire of God—"The kingdom of God is with you." A mind thus subjected to the government of "God in Christ," however comprehensive its ideas, will humbly exclaim, "how little a portion is heard of him!" It will review the operations of Providence, and feeling its own littleness, declare, "it is high! I cannot attain to it." This does not discourage his reflections, and render him indifferent to "the works of God's hands." No; he wishes to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height;" and to know the proceedings of God, which surpass knowledge!" when he comes to the limits of his knowledge in any point, with emotions peculiar to a believer in Jesus, he humbly adores, and cries "O, the *depth!*" He doubts not of the righteousness of the actions of God, however incompatible to a finite understanding: and forgets not, that there will be "a revelation of the righteous judgment of God." His judgments are *now* righteous, but they will one day *appear* so, to us, to all!

> "Then shall he make his glories known,
> And the whole world before his throne;
> With joy or terror shall confess,
> The glory of his righteousness."

I have often been instructed, astonished, and comforted by our Lord's answers to Satan, in that succession of temptations, recorded in the fourth of Matthew. Surely! our divine Lord, who had reason in all its strength and perfection, could have confuted and confounded that desperate spirit, simply by reasoning. He could have disclosed his artifice, weakness, falsehood and pride, by the *perfect reason;* and sent the apostate spirit, all confusion to his own place. But (mark and imitate it, my soul,) he replies to each temptation—"It is written?" Thus Christ obtained his victories, by that "sword of the Spirit, which is the word

of God." Here is our pattern. It is by "the word of God abiding in us," that *we* are strong, "and overcome the wicked one." In seeking satisfaction in the mysteries of revelation and Providence, merely by reasoning,—in attempting to elevate our minds to God, or conquer temptation by it,—we utterly fail. But

"Where reason fails with all her powers,
There *faith* prevails and love adores!"

Your's, &c.

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XII.—TO THE REV. JOHN GRIFFIN.

Dear Brother,

WHILST I was busy here and there, you were gone. How imperfect is every earthly source of happiness. The pleasure of communicating thoughts from soul to soul, even in *this* world, is very considerable; yea, even the *prospect* of such an exchange of ideas is pleasing. But in proportion to the mutual confidence and pleasure of friendly intercourse, is the pain felt at its interruption.—And even while conversing with you, "I sometimes sighed at the *thought* of our separation. These sensations I can no more avoid relative to you, than I can avoid breathing. My affection dictates a strong desire that God might place us near each other, for our mutual comfort and edification, but the plan of Heaven has otherwise fixed our abodes; doubtless, so as to consult our most permanent happiness. A lively faith in the wisdom and kindness of this plan;—a firm persuasion that it connects the present with the future, in the best manner; and that if we *fully* comprehended the influence of our present lot on our future existence, and on the different parts of the divine system, we should joyfully acquiesce in our situations, our duties, and our trials. Such a persuasion raises the soul to a just dominion over the body; a life of faith regulates a life of sense. Experience demonstrates that our friendship on earth is the effect of a power which formed our constitutions, our intellect, our taste and affections. We may live in the same town—in the same house, and converse daily by the same fire side, and form no friendship for want of a congeniality of soul, essential to it. And a thousand leagues are as one mile, where that essential

exists, as to the affectionate regards and purposes of friendship. May our friendship be strengthened by the bonds of truth and of grace; a growing excellence of character, and a wise, tender and operative affection: at length may it be consummated in Heaven, and there reviewed in its different progress, with grateful wonder, and realized to be as permanent as our immortal existence.

I am often impressed with the thought of our imperfect knowledge of each other in this world; and every thing tends to strengthen the apostle's paradox, of our being "unknown and yet well known." Judge of my friendship towards you by the number of my letters; and you must think I slight you: but if you could see my heart—I forbear, you can see it by seeing your own, in part, and a very considerable part too. When we are together, we talk, we smile, we open some feelings of our hearts; we say things to each other, which, if I judge of your heart by my own, we say to no other person on earth. Nor is this strange, for friendship has its freedoms *peculiar* to itself; freedoms which may or may not exist in any relation of life. But see John Griffin and John Cooke in their studies, with their Bibles opened before them;—or at the throne of grace, in their secret confessions, ardent requests, sharp conflicts, deep sighs, unutterable breathings, affectionate gratitude, and sacred triumphs! Are these the same men who a few hours ago walked and conversed together up the hill and through the vale? Yes, the same men, differently occupied, variously impressed; governed by the same principles in manifold appearances. "As face answereth to face in the water, so the heart of man to man." By this secret, I can see you in the deep meditations of the study; and the near approaches to God in the closet. Suppose not that you are concealed in the secret movements of your heart towards God;—no—your aims are always exceeding your attainments; and after delivering the best sermon you ever preached, and pouring out the most solemn and delightful prayer you ever presented to "the God of your life"—you anxiously vow to exceed yourself, and hope yet to "see greater things than these."

It is the declaration of David to his God, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." In *this* world, entire satisfaction is not attainable; we want something, or fear the loss of what we already possess. We are all imperfect beings, and are therefore very frequently displeased with ourselves and each other. And if

others were perfect, and we not so, they would often displease us! And too often we are dissatisfied with the conduct of the *blessed God*, from its contrariety to our views and inclinations. But in yonder world, we shall be *satisfied* with *God*, *ourselves* and our *society*. We shall never offend by negligence, mistake, or any bad passions. We shall suffer no want, fear no evil, expect no unpleasant changes. Hail! thou sum of our best wishes—thou Heaven of wisdom and love—of purity and joy! No separation by distance of place shall there pain us;—no sigh be heaved at the thought of closing our conference for a year or two; no uneasiness from the idea of *leaving* the world ourselves, or our friends leaving it before us. All our desires, as righteous, will then be accomplished, and found "as a tree of life." I sometimes look after this state of future existence, and enjoy it in *idea*. But delightful as that idea is—so much so, that I have known moments of unbelief, dejection and fear, lest it should be *too* much for my sinful and unworthy soul to enjoy. Yet I rejoice, that all my ideas fall short—very short—unspeakably short of "the glory to be revealed!" What is meant by "seeing face to face;"—by "knowing as we are known"—and finding "that which is perfect come, and that which is in part done away"—only eternity can declare,

"My soul, with all the powers I boast,
Is in the boundless prospect *lost*."

Your's, &c.

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XIII.—TO MRS. SEAGLE.

My Dear Friend, Bristol, February 20, 1795.

THOUGH I am absent in body, yet not absent in thought, and affectionate concern for your well-being in body; but especially in mind. You have renewed instances of the Lord's kindness, as often as he restores you to ease or health; or blesses an affliction to your *soul's* profit. "It is good for a man to bear the yoke," not only "in his youth; but in any stage of his existence, if God makes it so. Our trials of body and mind, are parts of *God's plan*. That plan is constituted for our present and future good, as well as for

the glory of God. If our trials lead our minds to self-concern, self-inquiry, and self renunciation;—if the Redeemer's power and atonement are more desired and trusted;—if God's will appears more wise, just and kind, in the most painful parts of his dispensations towards us; and we desire his will may be done upon us and in us; we may be certain that God sends our trials in *love*. We pray for an increase of faith, deadness to the world, resemblance to God, and assurance of his friendship. He answers our prayers; but often, by, what to us, proves "terrible things in righteousness;" yea, by terrible things in love, in wisdom and in grace. If we are converted, we wish to *know* it; and we cannot know our faith, love, hope or patience to be genuine, but by *trial*. Every affliction or temptation puts our faith to the *proof*. "God leads us about, to *prove us*." Our trials prove the *reality* and the *weakness* or *strength* of faith: although *in* the trial, it may seem to prove us destitute of any. This depends upon God's *design*. Some have one affliction of body after another; and talk of nothing but God's love to them, and their assurance of it. Where is the *trial* in all this? It is hardly worthy of the name. But if the Lord intends to *point* a trial, there shall be a circumstance to sharpen it. It pierces deep, and pains sorely. Others look on, sympathize, and perhaps wonder, that what appears to them a small trial, should so much affect us. This was the case with some of my friends, when I lost my child; but they did not see the small secret ingredient, which embittered every circumstance and constituted the poison which inflamed the whole. "The heart knows its own bitterness; and the *Lord* knows it; for he *appoints* that bitterness, and has a gracious end in it. Our pains give him no pleasure; for "God is love," in all his words and actions, towards his people. But "he takes pleasure in the *prosperity* of his servants," and promotes that prosperity by all the dispensations through which he leads them.

A good man often grieves that his *enjoyments* under the cross have not equalled what other Christians have expressed, or what he expected. But God does not send our trials for the ease of the flesh, nor merely the *comfort* of the mind. No; the absence of that comfort, and the painful doubts, the gloomy fears, the humbling convictions, and the perplexing suggestions of the adversary; these make the *edge* of the trial: without these things, the trial would not answer the purpose of God's wisdom and grace upon us. Our soul's

prosperity is not to be measured by our *comfort in* affliction, or *out* of it; for many are exceedingly comfortable, from the *good opinion* they have formed of themselves, and by *presuming* that God thinks of them as they think of themselves. But if the Lord separates us more from our conceit of our *wisdom*, *worth*, *strength*, and from our sinful *purposes* and *negligences*; if we are more *resigned* to his will, and more concerned to "*stand only* in *his counsel*," we shall look back upon our trials with reflections of wonder, love, and praise. We often mourn, because *our* end of the trial is not answered; that is, we are not so *comfortable* as we wish; but perhaps the *Lord's* end is accomplished; and when that is seen, we rejoice, where we before indulged unreasonable sorrow. Darkness and doubts—fears and perplexity may, and in some degree, will, assault us; but these things are very consistent with a steady walk with God.

Many a soul, in "a low estate," low in its views, low in its hopes and comforts, and low in its opinion of itself, has this lowness increased by the animal spirits being reduced, and the advantage Satan takes to harass them in such a situation. Shaken out of selfish desires, worldly hopes and comforts—they are ready to speak what they fear, that "the Lord has *forsaken* them. But when they have waited a season, and discover God's *steady purpose of mercy* towards them, through all their shakings—and experience fresh relief from the love, atonement, and intercession of Christ, through "the spirit of faith"—then that providence which seemed "dark and crooked," appears "light and straight." Its experience worketh "lively hope," that,

> "Not all that hell, or sin can say,
> Shall turn his heart, his love away."

With love to Mr. Searle, (my wife joins me)

I am your's, with affectionate sympathy,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XIV.—TO MR. WESTBROOK.

March 8, 1795.

MY dear friend must not think that he has been forgotten by me since I left home, for often have I mentioned you to my wife, and at some seasons, mentioned your name to one, of whom I trust

I may say, He is "your Father, and my Father; your God, and my God." I am now, through divine goodness, better in health, than at any period since I left home. The weather has been singularly changeable—invalids have sunk under its sudden changes; some to their beds, and others to their graves. At Bristol, every family complains of illness; and my dear brother's indisposition gave a considerable check to my recovery. At length I was obliged to yield, and request assistance. Well, let us stand upon our Watch Tower, "for the Lord hath a controversy with the land." He hath discovered this in the war; and by a destructive fever at home and abroad. God does not send the French to scourge us—he has ten thousand diseases at hand to accomplish his righteous designs. The Lord's voice crieth to the city, the country, and to the church, but only the men of wisdom can understand, and read his name. Since I have been at Bristol, men have left their families in health, and have been brought home from London; some, half dead, lived a few days, and departed. Others went out well, and are confined in London, by disorders. It really requires the presence of God, and the aid of his Spirit, to bear the dismal tales of many families we visit. We too are mortal; we must fall, or rather we are falling. Some mighty disorder, the first born of death, may soon seize us, and in the hour we think not, God may "change our countenance, and send us away." Let us neither presume, nor despond, but "rejoice with trembling." Let us rejoice, for the Lord reigneth over life and death, disease and health. But rejoice with trembling, for life and health are uncertain—Satan is busy—the heart is deceitful, to flatter our self-conceit, to defer the concerns of eternity to a future day, to substitute some duties for all, and to put the form for the power. Let us rejoice with trembling, for the heart is deceitful to divert us from *home*, from our own characters, families, sins, mercies, and duties; and lead us astray to the defects, diseases, deaths, or concerns of others; and whilst we are busy 'here and there,' time is gone! health is gone! life is gone!

If the Lord is neglected while speaking to us by the sickness or death of others, perhaps a 'fiery trial' may be preparing for us. Many presume, that however slothful they are in the means of grace, all will be comfort and joy in the hour of affliction. Amazing folly! pitiable delusion! When the hour of trial comes, they exclaim, 'Oh! had I but a sense of the love of God, I could bear

the trial." True, for *this* is very often the *point* of the trial: I mean a doubt, whether the trial is sent in *love*; and if the Lord intends the trial to be sharp and painful, that doubt shall perhaps be continued, and supported by sense, by Satan, and a train of false reasonings, by a sense of first sin, and by a cloud over all the evidences of the soul's conversion. Many professors are very joyful in affliction, from a proud self-preference of their own sentiments and characters. Evangelical in their opinion, confident of their safety in Christ, and full of proud self-love, and carnal joy, in spiritual things. Whose communion with God in secret prayer never can be proved by themselves; and whose slothfulness in divine things, and selfishness in worldly things, are evident to all but themselves. Tell them, with a serious countenance, that without *holiness* no man shall see the Lord, and your company disgusts them; they pity you as ignorant, or despise you as legal. Their false confidence, and self-conceit, is the more strong, because they are happy and joyful under a trial; and some, taking all for gold that glitters, praise them as saints of the first rate. I had much rather be the greatest blasphemer in all Maidenhead, than such a man. A man may call any thing a trial, and magnify it to feed his own vanity. The meaning then, is, what a great trial I have had! and how great my faith and patience under it! Whereas, in fact, he had only a trial in *nature*, and his great faith and patience are only in *name*—mere words. On the other hand, I find some of the Lord's children conflicting in the fire with Satan, with atheistical thoughts, with carnal reasonings about Providence, with doubts of their interest in God's love.

Instead of raptures, they are searching their hearts, and trying their ways; looking back, and searching and mourning over personal sins, family sins, sins in trade, known and unknown, mourning over lost opportunities, and formal duties. In the hour of solemn trial, the humbled Christian sets the highest value on his past mercies; and bows under a sense of ingratitude for, and no improvement of them. He learns where he has trifled about serious things, and been anxious about trifles. *Feeling*, as well as owning his own sinfulness, his weakness, and folly, his applications to God in Christ are real, humble, solemn, repeated, importunate, and successful. 'His affliction for the present has been grievous!' Darkness, doubt, uncertainty, conflict, self-confusion, and sore

temptation rendered it so. Nevertheless, it is for his *profit*, that he may be a partaker of God's holiness.

Strange, that God's children should judge of their profit by their comforts. They may deceive us, but God, who is the best judge of sterling *profit*, calls *holiness profit*. This profits the soul, profits it for eternity. Do our children feel comfortable under the rod? Should we be pleased to see them smile at their father's anger? No, surely! But if they owned their fault, wept over it, shewed their value of their father's favours, by thankfulness for his displeasure, intreated his forgiveness, and purposed to watch against a repetition of the transgression, how would the father act? Would he continue to frown? to rebuke? to chastise? Nay—"his bowels are troubled" for him, and "he will surely have mercy upon him."

My very dear brother and friend, excuse the rambling of my pen. I have written what first came to my mind after I took it up. In sickness and health, life and death, may you and your's know, experimentally, that "as a father pitieth his children," surely not less when in affliction, "so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

My dear Mary unites in love to you, Mrs. W., Mr. and Mrs. Aldridge, with your affectionate brother and friend,

J. COOKE

LETTER XV.—TO THE REV. MR. SIBREE OF FROME.

Maidenhead, Berks, April 6th, 1796.

MY dear brother asks me to mention any of his blunders in preaching, which have occurred to me, since I returned from Bristol. Alas! I have been reviewing my *own* blunders; and conscious of their number, I feel very awkward in mentioning yours. I fear lest any thing I write, should wear the appearance of assuming the air of a dictator. What appears a fault to one, is admired as an excellence by another. And what once appeared to me necessary in a sermon, now appears cumbersome. "I know not how to (preach) as I ought," but daily need the Spirit to "help my infirmities." I have preached until I feel my insufficiency for the pulpit, even to discouragement. But when I reflect, that "my sufficiency is of God," my weak hands and knees are strengthened. What appeared

to me, in some of your discourses, was the same as I wish to correct in myself:—*want of ideas directly related* to the *subject* of discourse. I often say to myself in studying a discourse,—Think—think—think again. Turn the subject round—consider how far *your own* temper, conduct, trials and enjoyments, will open, confirm, or illustrate the subject. Let the mind's-eye run round the church and congregation; and observe what relation the subject bears to the wants, sins, mercies, duties and temptations of different hearers. I am going to speak to the young and the aged; the rich and the poor; the careless and the convinced sinner;—to the weak, discouraged, backsliding and improving saints;—to the suffering and the rejoicing Christian: what can I deduce from my subject *suitable* to *each*, or as many as I wish to address?—This is *one* method of obtaining ideas, which I never neglect; because I always find it profitable to my hearers. By this method I avoid, or rather attempt to avoid, as much as possible, *a generalizing* method of preaching: this is speaking to every one and to no one. It is not enough to tell our hearers, that such a consideration is consoling to the tempted, the afflicted, the backslider and believer, in a common place way; such sermons may be lost: but we must describe a *particular case*, and meet it with considerations from our subject which suit it.—This interests the judgment and the heart of a hearer; confirms his faith, and lifts up his head. You well know, and have often heard a sermon, in which *even particulars* have been mentioned in so *general* a way, as to lose all useful effect. "To discourse upon any duty in general, without applying to particulars, is little more than idle declamation and empty flourish: it is to let our arrows fly at random, when we should direct them to a certain mark." The evil will the more easily be avoided, if, instead of attempting only to inform the understanding, affect the passions, gratify the curiosity, amuse the mere speculating humour, or astonish the imagination of our hearers, we adopt a very, *very* important rule of the apostle's, viz. "commending ourselves to *every* man's CONSCIENCE!—as in the sight of God!" Such a ministry, through a divine agency, must make the saint and sinner feel interested.—"It is quick and powerful." If the conscience is roused, and speaks to our hearers what *we* speak to them—they must feel—attend to, and are likely to profit from.

I have long been convinced, and observation strengthens my conviction, that if we would be useful preachers, we must violate some

rules of good preaching, which are in high estimation.—What would be called by some, vain repetition, is often the most useful part of a discourse. We must address and *appeal* to the conscience—let us pause—vary the appeal—repeat it—repeat it again 'till we see attention, if not personal concern awakened—'till we observe (feeling much ourselves) our hearers' sensations similar to our own. If some preachers can but deliver a favourite sentiment of some great man, or some silvery expression, they fancy they have done something; but *the words of God* are the arrows which pierce.—This word is the sword which divides—the lamp which illumines and guides. Let us open the mind of God to men, in *simplicity*, and we shall have the testimony of our own consciences, a witness in the breast of the hearer, and the approbation of God!—It is true, the assuming magisterial airs in the pulpit, is contemptible; and a weak, whining, affected tone, in pretence of affection, is invariably disgusting. It cannot please a sensible hearer, and always degrades the preacher who uses it.

As to "words and colouring," I have no rule or art about them, but what you know. I endeavour to *digest* and *feel* my subject, as well as I can, and then, I seldom or never find myself at a loss for words. I remember an instance of barrenness (I could name many) when I could find no opening into the word of grace. I wanted a text, it was late in the week, and none of my skeletons pleased me: this thought occurred,—get near to God!—draw near to God!—"Give thyself to PRAYER" as well as "to the ministry of the word." I shut my Bible, fell upon my knees, and spread my darkness, insensibility, and barrenness before God; and soon, "In his Light I saw light." I learned more from such a hint than from volumes of good books. I do believe, that if I prayed more, even if I read less, I should have more just and profitable thoughts of divine truths.

Let us also avoid very long sentences in the pulpit; for if we aim more at a round smooth period, although we may please some hearers, we shall disgust others, or perplex them; and our smooth and elegant expressions will be found like an ivory knife, or a pointless arrow. Little minds cannot receive the ideas of a long sentence in *reading*, much less in hearing; and if we would preach wisely, we must be willing to be accounted fools; laying aside "the wisdom of words," and yet seek to find out "the words of wisdom."

As to "arrangements," I endeavour to make them clear, plain, short, and varied. The words which describe the principal heads or thoughts, should be comprehensive and select: all these I charge on my memory. Some despise all plans, and pretend to regard only the power: but we have *memories*, and so have our hearers; and were they given for use in every thing, but what concerns the soul? Method is a great help to *study* and preaching; for when the subject is divided *into* three or four distinct heads, we pursue different subjects in one, with greater ease, distinctness, and extent. In forming a plan, although I should accidentally follow another person, yet, *intentionally*, I would follow none. I ask myself questions on the subject, and after obtaining the principal ideas in it, form two or three leading and including propositions; and such as they are, they are my own. If God lays a subject on the heart, pours an unction on the spirit, and we attend to its openings, I do think we shall not be at a loss for ideas, plan, or any thing necessary to form a useful discourse. But if we neglect to "give ourselves" to reading and meditation on *Monday* or *Tuesday*, from rule and habit, when the Spirit visits us, and offers his gracious communications; perhaps on Friday or Saturday, we may be left to "toil all day, and obtain nothing." To me, one thing has appeared very important—namely, that *when* or *wheresoever*, a train of good or useful thoughts occur to my mind, on a subject or text, I take my pen or pencil, and sketch them on paper, even if it happen on Lord's-day evening, or at a friend's house when on a visit. "They who WAIT upon the Lord, shall renew their strength."

I know not whether you use notes in the pulpit.—One observed, if used, "They should be like a quiver, on which a minister casts his eye, now and then, to receive what arrow is to be fetched from thence, and shot in earnest." I once used notes: but found my memory, upon *trial*, served me best. The subject is laid nearer my heart—I think I feel more dependence on the spirit—my own soul enjoys more—I am more unconfined, especially by candle-light; and any part of the subject more readily occurs to me another time, when I need it. It requires a little more pains to fix it in the memory; but amply, very amply does it repay for diligence. And sometimes a little art goes far, in stamping the ideas on the memory. I often find that I can sooner *stupify* myself than fill my memory with a subject; and then, especially of an afternoon, I

endeavour for a few moments to forget my subject and myself too ;— and then, perhaps, like the morning's review of an evening's meditation, the first review of my subject fixes the thoughts in my memory. But I forbear, lest I tire your patience. It often seemed to me when I heard you, that the length of your sentences obscured your ideas, particularly to those minds which bear much, and think little. Guard against a MONOTONE in your delivery. You *know* as well as I do, how this unnatural method of preaching *lulls*, where we should *rouse*, and besides exhausting the speaker, wearies the hearer, and prevents his profiting. I do not mean that all sentences should be equally short, but none too long or perplexed for the grasp of common understandings. And one *principal* word, bearing the principal *stress* of the voice, carries the ideas home to the hearer's intellect, and impresses them deeper on his heart. But how much easier for me to discern this, or any other defect in another, than correct one in myself! Alas! my Brother, shall I send it now I have written it? Little did I think of spreading so many thoughts on this subject upon paper: but if I do not send you a line, you will begin to think me forgetful. I have written as fast as my fingers could go, and hope every error, of every kind, will be overlooked. Your letter contained many subjects,—so that I was disheartened from the attempt at impossibilities—viz. to write my mind on so many in *one* letter, as you requested. Forgive my delay—pray forgive me, and I will endeavour *never* more to repeat this fault. We are through mercy all well. I have refused to go to Bristol this year; I hear you have done the same. Shall you be at the Missionary Meeting in May? Will you call and sleep at our house? and bring Mrs. Sibree with you? My dear Mary unites in love to you both, and joins in hoping that you will not reprove me any other way than by writing me another letter very soon, to put me to the blush for my long, long neglect. When you come, you'll preach for

Your affectionate brother,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XVI.—TO MR. LANGTON.

Dear Sir, Portsea, August, 1799.

I HAVE reason to be thankful, that although I am not entirely free from the effects of my late attacks, I am much better for the time than I could have expected. I never yet repented of any affliction through which I have passed. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," is the Divine declaration to the church. Not that the Lord chooses any one *because afflicted*, or for their temper or behaviour under the rod, but he *manifests* them to be the objects of his special choice, whilst in the furnace. There he produces in them those dispositions towards *sin*, *Christ*, and *himself*, which prove their regeneration, adoption, and election. Unsanctified health is a curse,—unsanctified affliction is a greater curse. What advantage can be derived from being sick and recovered to health of body, without an experimental sense of the truth of God? It is a serious evil to hear God's instructions in vain; but worse, much worse also to bear his rod in vain. We may charge our barrenness when we feel it, to various causes; but God assigns the true reason why any one does not profit by his truth, in affliction or health. "The word preached did not profit."—Why? "Not being mixed with FAITH *in them that heard it.*"

Unbelief also prevents the design of affliction. Under its reign nothing proves a blessing. This is the baneful principle that sheds its poisonous influence on the judgment, to mislead it; the conscience, to stupify or torment it; the affections, to enslave them; and the temper, to ruffle, sour it, or render it criminally pliant. On the other hand, if the Lord supports faith in its principle and exercise, as well as the profession of it, we enjoy the *promises*, feel union with the Saviour, resignation to the will of God, and a cheerful hope under every dispensation. If we possess faith, let us not repine at its trials. "The trial of faith is much more precious than of gold, which perisheth." This we too seldom believe. But how can we know that faith exists in us, without a trial of it? Indeed, many who profess it, cannot prove themselves possessed of it, *even by trials;* whilst others who never suspect their want of it, nor are suspected by others, are at "ease in Zion" without it! All, however, rich or poor, sick or healthy, must soon, very soon feel its worth. The wheel is turning; and those who now rejoice, will soon mourn. The healthy

will sicken, and death will show, by his power or weakness, the unutterable value of faith in the fulness of Christ, the promises, and his perfections, as engaged to fulfil them. The wicked soul must feel much, who seems to profess the truth, when conscience will be heard; but the unbelieving, slothful, and hypocritical professor, has most to fear. Happy spirit, that possesses a faith which can believe and rest in Christ; can fight and conquer; can prefer the approbation and friendship of God to all creatures; can aim at his glory and presence in its most solitary moments, and sustain with patience what he may lay upon it. Compared to these things, it is easy to pray in our families, in the closet, in the house of God; to talk of religion, and even to preach it. "The first shall be last,"—they who are first in human esteem, will be found an abomination in the sight of God. "And the last shall be first,"—overlooked by the creature, having neither power nor inclination to bring themselves into notice, they shall be found amongst "the Lord's hidden ones." It is, I am sure, a difficult thing to judge of our interest in the Redeemer, by past or present experience. In some seasons of peculiar darkness and temptation, disease, and conflict with self, thence to take the shortest way to God, by a bold venture upon Christ, and the mercy of God in him, and feel, by the success of our attempt, that we are forgiven and justified, renewed and comforted,—what an unspeakable favour!

The friends of the Missionary Society have received a great trial of their faith, in the loss of the ship Duff; a loss of between fifteen and twenty thousand pounds. What must the poor women have felt, separated a fortnight from their husbands, and exposed to the unprincipled Frenchman! I fear we have not heard the worst. How painfully mysterious the providence, which has given into such hands such a treasure! Providence apparently opposing the prayers of his people, the operation of his Spirit, the promises of God, and even opposing itself, in formerly succeeding us. But I doubt not that unknown circumstances of mercy will prove, that what appears to FRUSTRATE, will FORWARD the designs of the Society.

Mr. and Mrs. Griffin unite with kind respects to you and Mrs. Langton, with Mrs. C., and your's sincerely,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XVII.—TO A YOUNG PERSON.

(On a call to the Ministry.)

Dear Sir,

THE present exercises of your mind on a call to the *Christian Ministry*, will, with a divine blessing, terminate in the improvement of your *Christian graces;* as they lead you to self-examination, watchfulness and prayer; make trial of your faith, your self-denial, your diligence, your patience, your humility, and even of your integrity.

And should you be *mistaken* in a supposition that the Lord designs to call you to the Ministry of the Gospel,—the mistake will prove the *occasion* of interesting impressions on your mind.

It is of vast importance, if you engage in the ministry, not only that you should have a *call* to that office, but that you should possess full and satisfactory *evidences* of your call. One person's call may be clear, and he remain dissatisfied; another may be fully persuaded of his call without any evidence. This should produce cautious fear of deception. Should you be deceived, what serious consequences may affect your character, your comfort, and the cause of Christ!

Many persons under their first serious impressions of the worth of souls, the love of Christ, the glory of salvation, and their own interest in it, have felt a lively concern to preach the Gospel to their fellow sinners; who, notwithstanding, were soon satisfied that the *Lord did not require* it of them. One hour they were elated with the honour and happiness of converting souls,—the next, trembled at the thought of "running, unsent," the ministerial race. They prayed, feared, waited, and the Lord directed their steps. As he did not call them to the work, and they desired his guidance, he prevents them from taking a wrong step.

They might possess good sense, holiness, a studious disposition, a general knowledge of the Scriptures, an eminent gift in prayer, and yet not be called to *preach*. As, however, they desired to be kept from every false way, and were afraid of their own hearts, "the INTEGRITY of the upright" directed their way. They believed and did not make (sinful) haste; and now sing, "The God of my mercy prevented me."

Other persons, determined from carnal motives to enter the ministry, have first deceived, and then ruined themselves. The deceitful heart, weak friends, and the great deceiver, have thrust many a "novice" into the ministry, who being filled up with pride, has soon fallen into the condemnation of the devil." They have lost their character,—proved a stumbling block to the weak, and hardened the wicked.

You know Joseph A——, who was a member of the church at Maidenhead, several years, and engaged in public prayer. He thought he was called to the Ministry; I thought he was deceived. After teasing me two or three years, he resolved to offer himself to Lady Huntingdon's College. He went to London, heard three ministers; and the censures bestowed on the sermons, as the hearers went home, disheartened him, and he relinquished all thoughts of it.

Next year he was again full of the subject: he said he could not enjoy any means of grace or life, whilst he resisted the thought. Providence also blasted his temporal affairs, and this confirmed him in his opinion. He resolved *again* to enter the Ministry; and the Lord prospered his affairs. He proposed a sign to the Lord—it was granted. Now he felt a full persuasion that he was called. *In* opening the case to me, I told him, that I judged Satan had deceived him, and as his pride was resolved on the Ministry, God met him in his own way, and gave him the sign he asked as a judgment. No way opening according to the sign, he was tempted to think God had deceived him, and to blaspheme his Providence. At length, idleness reduced him to beggary, and pride deranged his mind, and he is now in a madhouse. Never did I see a man more confident that he was called to the Ministry, than he was; nor hear one so frequently declare, that he had no other motives than the salvation of souls, and the honour of God! So here are Solomon's words, "A fool rageth and is confident."

Some persons of apparent gifts and grace have been deceived on this subject,—what then? Tremble at the thought of being hasty and presumptuous; and pray that the Lord would rather "hedge up your way with thorns," than permit you to impose on yourself in this exercise of your mind.

I may enforce caution,—from the consideration, that if you rush into the Ministry, without a divine call "you will go the warfare

at your own charges;" for you cannot rationally expect the presence and blessing of the Redeemer; and what success can you expect without them? Nor can you look to him for any reward of your work.

In *unexpected* temptations, what can shield you? In Ministerial difficulties what can support and animate you? And without ascertaining your call before you engage in such a work,—what can ensure you peace of mind, fortitude to bear the weight of trial, and courage to face dangers? When I have preached in a village, with sixty or a hundred desperadoes about the house, I have been often compelled to produce my *warrant* from the Bishop for preaching in that *house*, and from the Bishop of Souls, for preaching his Gospel in any place. When life is endangered, the devil asks, and a tender conscience *demands* a reason of our hope and *practice* too. If not ready to give an answer to silence the adversary and satisfy conscience,—what can render us "bold as a lion?"

Your's faithfully,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XVIII.—TO A FRIEND.

(*On Studying Sermons.*)

Maidenhead,—1812.

I HAVE, my dear Guyse, given you a few thoughts relative to the gospel ministry, which, should God spare your life, you will, with a blessing, find useful. And as you repeatedly requested, and I promised it, I felt myself bound to communicate.

Observe the wind and tide in your favour. You will sometimes find a stream of truth running into your soul, when you least expect it, and a contrary wind when you wish to push forward. I have received such gracious influences and openings of divine truth on a Monday, when my body has been exhausted; which have fixed me in my study, until I have arranged half a dozen sermons. And even on a Sabbath evening, when a text has been unfolded to me, I have studied a sermon with speed and pleasure. The flesh has been weary, but my spirit has "obeyed the heavenly vision."—Whereas

at another time, I have turned over the leaves of my Bible, read and reflected for a week, with profit as a Christian; but have not obtained a single sermon. I seemed as a minister, to toil all the week, and have caught nothing. If this disappointment has been painful, it has not been unprofitable. Whilst it prevented self-sufficiency, and self-complacency, it has made me more dependent on supernatural aid. When I have in such seasons sat down, thinking to "do as at other times," I have been becalmed or wind-bound. I have laid down my pen, shut my book, locked my door, and prostrated myself before God. After humbling myself as one that could do nothing, and implored the Spirit of life and truth,—"I have gone on my way rejoicing." Every chapter and almost every verse I read, has been opened to my view—and rewarded, graciously rewarded my application to "the Father of lights."

Finding the unprofitableness of study without prayer, I have resolved with Mr. Hervey, "if I read less, to pray more." The unspeakable advantages of a devotional spirit, have reminded me of the apostle's words, "We will give ourselves to the ministry of the word and to prayer." This is going up "into the Mount" for our message; to receive it as from "the mouth of God!" There, we are surrounded with light, filled with truth, "covered with the covering of God's Spirit," clothed with authority, animated with zeal and courage. There, we understand and "know the CERTAINTY of the words of truth," the heart glows and "indites good matter;"—"the gift of utterance" is imparted, and "the tongue is as the pen of a ready writer." It is an enemy that suggests, that the time spent in prayer is lost from study; and woe to that minister that believes him! "Satan may transform himself into an angel of light," by urging us to study the word of God. Yet this he will often do secretly, to make us "restrain *prayer* before God!" and the young minister, "ignorant of this device," does not at first perceive, that he may so read and study even the scriptures, as to impoverish his spirit, and render his studies unprofitable. Mechanical preachers form mechanical hearers; "having the form and system of godliness; but denying the power" of it. They have the "letter" of their office, without the "spirit" of it. Their ingenuity,—their plans and style may be admired; but their sermons at best are but as "a lovely song, or as one that plays skilfully on an instrument of music." The imagination of the hearers may be amused, his pas-

sions moved, and his judgment informed, whilst conscience sleeps, and the heart is unsanctified.

No fact is more evident, than that hearers imbibe the *spirit* of their ministers; if our spirits are cold, merely speculative and disputatious, trifling and vain,—the effect will resemble the cause. If we would "preach liberty to the captive,—the opening of the prison to them that are bound,"—instrumentally, "bind up the broken hearted,—comfort them that mourn in Zion,—give the oil of joy for mourning,—the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness,"—we must be able to say,—"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings." We must therefore pray as well as preach,—"pray without ceasing" for the spirit, that we and our hearers may not only read, study, preach, and hear, but "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Then our ministry will be "the ministry of the Spirit," and we shall not "labour in vain."

I remain truly your's,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XIX.—TO THE SAME.

My Dear Kinsman,

IN the early part of my Christian profession, I eagerly seized every human author in divinity; preferring them to the Bible itself, because I thought I understood them better than the prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ. This I lamented, and felt the reproofs of conscience for it. I often suspected my sincerity on this account. I resolved to make trial of the sacred Scriptures, by reading one part of the day a few chapters in the Old Testament, and at another, some chapters in the New Testament. This method with a blessing, soon opened my eyes, corrected my error in practice, and endeared the sacred volume. Reading one morning that part of Abraham's history, where he feared the inhabitants of the land would kill him, to possess his wife; and in the afternoon, reading a few chapters in Proverbs, I paused at Solomon's words, "The fear of man bringeth a snare;" and was so struck with the illustration of it, by the snare which entangled Abraham, as to think Solomon had it in

his eye. I began to see, that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture; and from that trial "compared Spiritual things with Spiritual."

On another occasion, I read the Jewish law respecting a bird, which might be killed when wandering in the field or flying in the air; but not on her nest. After this I read Solomon's words, alluding to it, "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is the man that wanders from his place;"—his danger begins with his wandering for safety! Ever after, my mind was determined on keeping my eyes on the Sacred Scriptures night and day: and, by the divine blessing, this has furnished me for thirty years, with three sermons on the Lord's day, and twice on week evenings. And the more I read, preach, converse, and expound, the more amply I am filled with divine truth. All my fears of wanting a text or a subject, vanished, when I adopted this plan. Yet such was my folly and disposition to "cleave to the dust," that the first funeral sermon I was called to preach, I flew to Dr. Bates' Sermon on Death. I read it with attention and anxiety; but on my finishing it, felt myself weary, unhappy, disappointed. The thought occurred—why not read the book of Job, the Psalms, the writings of Solomon on the subject of death? I did so, and was soon supplied with a text and a sermon. This cured my folly, and convinced me, that the word of God is "able to make the man of God perfect," or completely furnish him for his work.

Your's faithfully,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XX.—TO THE SAME.

(*On Commentators.*)

Dear Guyse,

I RECOMMENDED you to read the pure word of God, without comment; and this, I would advise you to do daily. I have found my account in this plan; and especially, in reading a book of prophecies, or an Epistle from beginning to end, *at one time*. By this means, the writer explains himself: as by perusing the whole letter from a friend, one part throws light upon another. This will guard

you against the bias which Commentators will otherwise give your mind.

I would for the same reason, read a good Commentator through one book, that I might discern his complete views of Divine truth. One writer on the Sacred Scriptures, communicates his exposition under a strong sense of the dangerous tendency of the Arminian scheme. Perhaps he has in his eye, some preacher or preachers, whose sermons are merely doctrinal, and their tempers and lives immoral. This occasions him to write little on the distinguishing doctrines of Grace, and to enlarge on the practical parts of Scripture. He is afraid to write fully on doctrines which Antinomians abuse, and so obscures the glory of the Gospel. That he may not "give the children's bread to dogs," he will starve the children themselves. Forgetting that a man's danger is from *the corrupt principle* that governs his soul, which will abuse any truths that stands in his way;—and not from a statement of the Gospel in all its fullness and Grace.

A second class of Commentators lean to the opposite extreme, and ring changes on a few favourite doctrines; insisting that to enforce the commands of God, is legal, unnecessary, and even dangerous. They despise the words *duty* and *obligation;* assuring us, that if their favourite doctrines be believed, duty will follow, as a thing of course.

Does not this impeach the wisdom of God in giving us such numerous and various precepts? Would "The only wise God," present us with exhortations, cautions and directions if they were needless? Does not the experince of good men prove the necessity and advantage of precepts and threatenings, as well as doctines and promises? And do not the negligence and slothfulness, the tempers and lives of these boasters demonstrate the propriety of detailing the *duties* of believers? Let us then receive the whole truth,—"the whole counsel of God;" and not be "wise above what is written."

One writer gives you his spiritual sense of a text, and passes over the literal meaning of it, as carnal. He finds types where the Apostle Paul could not discern them. Every time the words *righteous* or *righteousness* occurs, instead of explaining the disposition or action to which it obviously refers, he drags in the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and renders half the Scriptures useless.

No class of writers are more calculated to mislead the judgment and form a vicious taste, than those who expound the Sacred Scriptures

by a narrow system. This is remarkable in Dr. Gill. He has written nine folio volumes of comment on the Sacred Scriptures. I think all he has written in them, might be well compressed into four volumes. His repetitions of quotations from the Jewish commentators are endless. He finds as much of Christ and the doctrines of Grace in the book of Proverbs, as in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. The Millennium, or Christ's personal reign, though of "doubtful disputation," he finds almost every where in the sacred volume. He gives you half a dozen *meanings* to a verse, and then rejects five of them, or selects one which suits his favourite theme. You are often occupied in reading what God decreed to do, millions of ages past, and what he will do in ages to come, when you should be considering, what God is now doing. An aged Baptist minister once remarked, that Dr. Gill's comments had done more to give a partial view of the word of God, and corrupt the taste of ministers and hearers, than all the Calvinistic writers in the world. And another minister of universal reading remarked, "a man should understand the Scripture well, before he reads Dr. Gill." I like Dr. Gill, said a third person, because "he is always *consistent with himself.*" This, however, I do not consider as an excellence, all things considered.

Consistency may be cold and forced. A man may *cut* his way through the Scriptures, to be consistent with *himself*, and not be consistent with the *Scriptures*. This I think is the fact, with the pious and learned, Dr. Gill.

Yet I can read Dr. Gill with profit; am charmed with Henry and Doddridge, though they often contradict themselves; admire the impartiality of Mr. Scott, in his doctrinal, experimental and practical comments; love the critical and evangelical volumes of Poole; and I am edified and delighted with the judicious and comprehensive views of Dr. Guyse. Assisted by them all,—by sound experience and a vigilant attention to the divine conduct, towards the church and the world,—with your eyes day and night in your Bible, and your heart directed through the Mediator to "the Father of of Lights," may "the Spirit of the Truth," lead you into all the truth.

Your's faithfully,
JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXI.—TO A STUDENT.

Maidenhead,———

My Dear Friend,

No one thing is more important to a minister of the gospel, than to be furnished with suitable subjects for the pulpit. This, in a diligent use of means, must be sought in a spirit of dependence on God. The omission of this duty, occasions many ministers to "suffer loss," and preach the sermons of others, without "a savour of the knowledge of Christ," in their own souls, and with little success in their work. Finding themselves poor in materials for their work, they preach but seldom, and fear a bankruptcy. Frequent preaching, they imagine, will exhaust their little stock. I will lay before you the plan on which I have acted, which has supplied me with three sermons on the Lord's day, and two or three in week days as occasion required; and also afforded me two hundred subjects, which I have never yet preached. And remember, that my wants have been thus supplied for thirty years.—Whenever a text of scripture has opened to my mind, at home or abroad, I have immediately taken pen and paper, divided the text, and pursued the subject as far as I could on that occasion. I then placed the paper in an old book, in its proper place, which I divided with a few leaves between Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and the other books of scripture. If the text was in Genesis, I put the skeleton among those in that book, and so arranged the rest. If the text was in Matthew, I placed it in that parcel, which contained subjects on Matthew. If at any other time the subject occurred again, I took out the skeleton, and clothed it as new ideas presented themselves on the subject, and returned it to its place. When a subject in John, for instauce, was presented to me, I turned to my old book, which contained subjects on John's gospel, to see if I had any paper on the text, which very frequently happened. Finding materials ready, I was greatly assisted;—my subject was half or three parts studied, perhaps ten years before. This is a branch of wisdom; for Solomon remarks, that "wise men lay up knowledge."

Some time since the words of David impressed my mind, "Lord, open thou my eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things in thy law." After I had suffered my thoughts to run out on paper, as

long as the spring flowed, I turned to my old book, and looking over the texts in the Psalms, which I had laid up, with previous meditations on them, I found this text among them, which I had studied ten years before, at an inn on my way to London. Adding the last reflections to the former, I formed a sermon, and preached it. Before this plan was suggested to me, I was frequently at a loss, and pushed hard on the Saturday for suitable subjects for the Sabbath. I found that passages occurred on a Monday, and I postponed the consideration of them till Thursday or Friday: but when I sat down to study them, they were sealed up; the lively savour, the deep impressions were gone, and I could not revive them. This taught me, that if I would not accept them in *God's* time, he would not impart them in *my* time. From this period I always began to work my mill and grind, when the wind arose; or, like the mariner on the rising of a fair wind, I spread my sails, knowing that I could not grind or sail when the wind ceased to blow.

A second important rule was suggested by experience—always to preach on that subject which was laid on my mind with the greatest power. For the first year of my ministry, I often felt a text laid on my heart with powerful influence; and saying to myself, this will suit such a particular occasion, I laid it up; but it proved like the manna, which by keeping lost its pleasant and nourishing qualities. This distrust punished itself, by painful disappointment. And observing that my hearers generally feel the subject in proportion as I feel it, I have endeavoured to preach from my heart to their heart. Often have I heard sermons well arranged and well expressed, but one thing was wanting—the preacher did not put his *heart* into the sermon, and therefore did not put the sermon into my heart. The sermon was "like a frosty night, cold and clear." If, therefore, as ministers, we would "live in the spirit, walk in the spirit,"—study, preach, and pray in the spirit,—we must not "quench the spirit" in his gifts and graces, but cherish and follow his operations, "in season and out of season;" for "it is the spirit that quickeneth."

Yours, &c.

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXII.—TO A STUDENT.

Dear Sir,

IN your anxious desire to be qualified for preaching the word of God, your first study must be to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." Read the pure word, without any comment. Give the most interesting parts of it, a place in your memory. In taking an evening walk alone, with a small Bible in my hand, I have engaged my soul to receive and retain, for instance, the fortieth chapter of Isaiah; and not only found the task delightful, but easily accomplished it, and have never forgotten it. The memory thus enriched, will save you the trouble of turning down the leaves of your Bible and *reading* a passage; it will assist you in writing your sermons, as the chapter and verse marked down, will revive, by one glance, an impression of the verse and its connexion. You will also quote the word more correctly, with ease and confidence. I very early put the book of Proverbs in my memory; and ever after found it illustrated and confirmed, by all I saw, and heard, and felt.

In a journey to Essex by the stage, I was painfully annoyed by the nonsense of my fellow travellers, who perceiving my disapprobation by my looks and silence, asked me what I thought of them. I answered, you are confirming my faith in the sacred Scriptures. Will you be offended if I answer your inquiry more explicitly? No! they exclaimed with a laugh. Then I replied, I never understood Solomon's remark before, "the mouth of fools, POURETH out *foolishness*." This turned the current of the conversation, and gave me the lead to the end of the journey. The advantages of a well furnished memory are too numerous to mention. You are prepared for all companies—every event recals a suitable text—the majesty of revealed truth puts to silence gainsayers—seasonable counsel flows from "the well-spring of wisdom." It will convict, restrain, console, stimulate to read the Scriptures, prevent much sin—increase the weight of character—occasion grateful recollection—strengthen faith, and render you "the light of the world—the salt of the earth"—as far as "your conversation is becoming the Gospel." Your heart will become "a good treasury; and out of its *abundance* your mouth will speak."

The soul is thus qualified for extempore prayer, on various occasions, and happily expresses the mind of God, and speaks "a word in season," to those who unite in social prayer. In "the hour of temptation, divine truth will be "your shield and buckler." You know who said, "thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee." Your spirit will also be prepared for profitable meditation, in society and solitude; and the Holy Spirit will often unite his influences with a sentence, to render a verse "a lamp to your feet, and a lanthorn to your path." And whilst you close your eyes on your pillow, musing on some word of grace, it will sanctify your very dreams—and "when thou wakest it shall talk with thee."

I need not quote to you the example of him who made his hearers "wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth!" He could have silenced his adversaries by reasoning; but he exposed their sophisty, silenced their cavils, defeated their malice, frustrated their plans, mortified their pride, and deepened their convictions, by a constant reference to "Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." And in his conflict with the great adversary, he used "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God!"

To every new temptation, his answer was, "it is written—*it is* written again." Thus *he* drove the enemy from the field, "resisting him steadfastly in the faith" of revealed truth. From that book which is "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness," may you be "THOROUGHLY FURNISHED, for every good word and work."

I am, your's affectionately, for the truth's sake,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXIII.—TO A STUDENT AT PAINSWICK, UNDER THE TUITION OF THE REV. CORNELIUS WINTER.

My Dear Brother,

You are now, I suppose, at Painswick, in the possession of many little conveniences, and exercising many innocent freedoms, which add to the happiness of your life, and render your situation a *home*. This is common to man. But *your* home has additional attractions. There the labours of the student are sweetened by the instructions

of the tutor; the pleasures of friendship, communion with God; and the prospect of usefulness. A situation which overwhelms me with tears of joy on your behalf; and I doubt not but your soul feels a disposition to acknowledge to the God of your life, "Thou hast dealt *well* with thy servant." May you enjoy your present lot with an improving mind, and grateful affections: Affections resting in God as your "dwelling-place," through a life of obedience, of trials, and of comfort. Many learn the propriety of cherishing a grateful regard towards "the God of all comforts," when their ingratitude is punished with the loss of important blessings. These are sentiments familiar to your mind; the grateful workings of which I have witnessed, when reflecting on the manner in which God has distinguished you, and your words seemed to echo the feelings of my own heart. I think I see you stop in your way to Wooburn, and ask "Is it all reality? or is it a dream? am I deceived? I am astonished! I am perfectly lost! when I reflect on the divine goodness to me." And indeed, my brother, the operations of God's hand without us are marvellous, as well as the operations of his Spirit within us. And every day affords a gracious mind occasion to exclaim, "Thou art the God that doest WONDERS!" And does he perform any thing but wonders? Why, then, is our admiration of his providential proceedings, so rarely excited? A criminal self-love too much governs our regards to his providence. What he does on my behalf, is truly surprizing! And is his conduct to others less so? A proper attention to the narrative of other believers, will repay us with instruction, confirmation, and joy. It will bring to our minds the former loving-kindness of the Lord, reprove and humble us for inattention and forgetfulness.

But in our little attention to providential appearances for *others*, there is nothing contrary to what might be expected, when many, if not most of them, relative to our own concerns, are lost to minds so dark and limited as ours. When some embarrassing circumstances alarm our minds, or our fear suggests some singular danger, weighty affliction, or mortifying trial,—some unconquerable temptation, or expences exceeding our present little fund and expectations, then our inquiry is, how can I escape the danger, endure the trial, avoid the disgrace, or obtain the necessary supply? Carnal reasoning, the child and cherisher of unbelief, soon raises a cloud of gloomy thoughts in the mind, which give us false views of God,

ourselves, and our condition. If a complaining word is prevented, yet a murmuring thought dare rise in secret; faith and unbelief, hope and fear, prayer and silence, alternately are experienced. In this season of anxious probation, if some unexpected incident connects a number of interesting circumstances, which leads to the accomplishment of our desire, and even to surpass our hopes, then we confess that God is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

But when our affairs run on, with an easy regularity, for a considerable length of time, we feel a propensity to live by *sense*, in contemplating the operations of second causes, till we almost lose sight of the first. Now, in this still moment, God's providence is equally marvellous in managing our affairs, as when our "souls were cast down within us," and our fearful hearts said, "All these things are against me." The article of friendship, for instance, manifests the same disposition. We more admire the Divine interposition in giving us a friend, unknown until needed, and then kinder than we can believe, than in the *continuation* of former friends. A new friend forces out the grateful tear, and the lips speak forth God's praise. It should be so But, considering the variations in the interests, connexions, and tempers of men, the continuation is always worthy of our most grateful notice. Why, then, do our little partial minds swell in a sense of one new mercy, more than at the recollections of many old ones! There was a moment, when those blessings we *now* enjoy, were the objects of our anxious attention, and fervent prayer; and I hope there is a moment to come, when the review of forgotten favours will occasion emotions, more suitable to our obligations. When we reflect on our mercies, we rather lament our ingratitude, than rejoice gratefully before the Lord. Yet the Lord is kind as wise, in every part of his plan relative to our conditions, in all this beautiful variety of circumstances.

The whole of that plan we are unable to survey, and detached parts often wear an obscurity, which puzzles our reason, and staggers our faith. But when that plan, in the harmony and connexion of its parts, its vast compass, and noble designs, shall be laid open to our minds, (enlivening prospect!) our admiration and love will never know a period. Till then, let us try to remember "the ways in which the Lord our God hath led us," and review the disgraceful dilemmas into which our unsuspected folly had plunged us, if "the

God of our mercy had not prevented us." When our unwise and laboured schemes were just ripe, divine goodness crushed them; showed us the consequences which must have followed our success, how were we shielded, and "led by a way which we knew not." In many cases, had we obtained our wishes, and performed our enterprises, we should have trembled, where we now rejoice. Happy for us, if a consciousness of the vanity of our own devices, and of the admirable wisdom of the Lord's proceedings, constrains us to acknowledge, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps." Let us, then, walk by faith in our ever present and gracious guide, who, though unseen, is not unknown.

May the Divine Spirit maintain in us an incorruptible integrity of heart towards God and man; a disposition to incessant prayer, an humble and diligent attention to our respective duties, and to "acknowledge God, in all our ways." Then we may encourage ourselves in the Lord our God: for "his eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him." When I look back, all I recollect of myself humbles me; and all I have known of God, endears him to me. When I look forward, through the short portion of days to come, (I may never see another), I can sing, "Thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of thy wings, will I rejoice." Join me in singing,

"Since thou hast been my help,
To thee my spirit flies;
And on thy watchful Providence,
My cheerful hope relies."——

Your's faithfully,

J. Cooke.

Letter XXIV.—To a Student at Homerton.

My dear Brother,

As you are satisfied that infinite wisdom directed you to exchange Bristol for Homerton Academy, I doubt not, but your heart feels afresh the propriety of that injunction., "In every thing give thanks;" especially, as your present situation is comfortable. I

think of your present advantages: a gracious and an able tutor, the company and edifying conversation of fellow students, who are "fellow-heirs of the Grace of Life;" surrounded by friends, who are wise, kind, and communicative; blessed with much time for study, and a disposition to improve it; also, with various opportunities of hearing the gospel from men of eminence for grace, talents, experience, and success; happy in the affection, the counsel, the prayers, and the pattern of your godly and judicious friend, Mr. Wilks. What may we not expect from you? To you, "much is given;" and of you, "much will be required;" but not too much. May all these advantages be sanctified to your increase, in every suitable qualification for the work of the ministry;" in which may you labour, with the presence and blessing of God; possessing much peace in your own soul, and doing much good to the souls of others, who shall be your "joy and crown," in the presence of God and the Lamb, for ever.

You say, you begin "to perceive more of your own ignorance." May you see more still; or "knowledge will puff up." Without this, pride would often make comparisons between Brother Hopkins and some of his fellow students, very flattering, but very injurious to himself. Yes, even in your pious Academy, where you watch over, and pray for one another, you may feel a temptation to pride; for what can please the devil more, than to see his own image in God's creatures? May a constant sense of your advantages and defects as a student; and of your sins, privileges, and obligations as a Christian, through the Holy Spirit's power, "clothe you with humility." For the meek, God will guide, in judgment (guide judiciously, says Mr. Howe) "the meek will he teach his way." Your desire is "to glorify God," you observe. This noble aim will prevent you from envying your fellow students, who may appear to make a more rapid progress than yourself. I have often prayed for power to rejoice in the gifts of others. This is no mean gift. To do this, our eye must be single. If God's glory is the real and reigning aim of our souls, we shall rejoice in the gifts of others, which tend to that end; and obtain a happy conquest over a selfish and jealous spirit.

Unless our spirits are thus preserved from this malignant disposition, we shall be tormented by that, which otherwise, would promote our happiness. In the prospect of your work, and under a

consciousness of your own weakness, you cry, "who is sufficient for these things?" Who, indeed! And the more I know of myself and my hearers, the more I know of my work, and its consequences to the believers, and unbelievers among them. The more I am acquainted with the "methods of Satan," the deceitfulness of my own heart, and the number of "men pleasers," who call themselves the Ministers of Christ, the more *feelingly* I can use the apostle's words. And none can use these words sincerely, unless they can add, with the apostle, "For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity—but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." Does the preacher, who accommodates his discourses to the favourite tenets and passions of his hearers, without remorse, feel his insufficiency? Does the man, who ascends the pulpit to flatter his wealthy hearers, and commend himself to their esteem, by indulging their humours, does *he* groan out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" No; it is the man who "shuns not to declare all the counsel of God." It is the man who "commends himself to *every* man's *conscience*, in the sight of God!" He can commend himself to the conscience of the mere moralist; and urge upon it the necessity of *experimental* godliness to the conscience of the self-righteous Arminian, and urge the importance—the perfection and efficacy of a Redeemer's righteousness to the conscience of the Antinomian Calvinist, and insist upon the *fruit* of evangelical doctrines, in his temper and actions, without fearing the charge of legality. This is the man who will feel so much to do, and so much to bear, as will constrain him to sigh out, "Who is sufficient for *these things*?" But many so exclaim, who cannot feelingly add, "our sufficiency is of God." To live near to God as a Christian, and find ourselves qualified for our work, happy and successful in it, this, all this is of God.

I have heard some students groan on leaving a Christian academy, that their *Bible* had been so much neglected, while there; and what followed? A barren soul, as a Christian, whatever progress they made as students. But you forget not, I am persuaded, that the time you spend at the Academy, is a small, but real part of a very, very short life; a part that will be reviewed by my Brother when he has left it. Blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit, and experiencing the efficacy of revealed truth, through his agency, may your soul flourish, and your conversation be useful. His pre-

sence adds to our stock of experimental and useful knowledge; but without it, the memory may grow weaker, or stronger, to no good purpose; the mind may be stupid, the affections carnal, and truth known only in the letter of it. And it is more than possible, that your fellow students may feel the infection, feel it powerfully, and feel it long, and communicate it extensively. But I will rather expect, what I most sincerely wish, and for which, when I have finished this letter, I intend to pray, that your fellow students, from whom you will soon be parted, may often recollect, with pleasure and profit, the divine savour, the spirituality of your mind. Is it possible to know, how many you may affect, by affecting them? And how widely the influence of your experimental conversation, and spiritual temper may spread?

Your affectionate friend,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XXV.—TO THE REV. A. FULLER.

THE letters which Mr. Summers conveyed to me, I have read with attention and profit. Your ideas on this interesting subject, I wish to see in the possession of the Christian world, as it is called. Mr. Booth's late publication on Divine Justice, endeavours to confute your letters. You will, I dare say, notice his arguments. I did not preserve silence on this subject at Wallingford, from unsocial reserve, but because you expressed my sentiments more clearly than I should have done. And whether your sentiments be right or wrong, your writing must be understood. God has given you the faculty of thinking and writing with perspicuity.

Your "Gospel Worthy," &c.—and reply to opponents I have read. I bless God for leading me in that path very early; it has preserved me from the embarrassments of human systems—systems, which are supported with a zeal which produces works fully corresponding to them. It is a mercy, as a minister, to be "the Lord's free man." I have seen and lamented it, that in too many pulpits, changes are rung on the doctrines of election, finished salvation, and perseverance, when neither are explained. Like the text, they are detached from their relatives, and supported only by the assertions of the speaker.

Election supersedes means,—men impute Christ's righteousness to themselves and each other, to justify them in their sins. Confidence in their own knowledge and security, is faith. *Finished* salvation is enjoyed, where the good work is not begun. They glory in the *doctrine* of perseverance without entering "the narrow way," and, therefore, persevere in delusion, false peace, the spirit of the world, and contempt of all preaching as legal, which requires them to *adorn* the doctrines by a suitable temper and conduct. Often do they rest for salvation on unknown decrees, and expect to "see the Lord" without holiness; except their orthodoxy be holiness. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, whilst they trample it under foot, by a practical denial of its efficacy.

Your's, faithfully,
JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXVI.—TO MRS. SEARLE IN AFFLICTION.

My Dear Friend,

MY soul feels for your soul, in its present trial, beyond what I could express, if I saw you. And as I cannot have the pleasure of speaking to you, I hope you will take a line from me, as expressive of my sincere wishes for your welfare. Be not discouraged at the present dispensation; I believe it to be mixed with mercy; and if so, the *frowns* of a father, especially of *such* a father, may be borne with patience; yea, with confidence and love. Remember, my dear friend, that God is not only wise, but he is, strictly speaking, "God only Wise." He loves, speaks, and acts wisely. If I could remove your disorder, I would instantly do it; it would be my duty. God can remove it and does not; but he will do more, he will *bless* it, which I cannot do. "He seeth not as man seeth;"—man—a friendly man, would remove pain and disease from you; but God will remove the power of the *cause* of diseases. Do not say, through a discouraged spirit, under the power of sense, of unbelief, and fleshly reasoning, that, "God has forgotten to be gracious," no; he cannot forget his own *nature*, his own *son*, and his own *promise*. But then, the displays of his gracious nature, are *various*. His apparent *seve-*

rity to his children, springs from his grace. The most affectionate parent will frown at, rebuke, and chastise his child. God frowns in love, rebukes in love, strikes in love: "As many as *I love*, *I rebuke* and *chasten*." This is the Lord's encouraging declaration." Be *zealous* therefore, and *repent*," this is his wise and kind command.

Some, like clay, are hardened by the furnace; others, like stubble, are *consumed* by it; but when *we* "are *tried*," may we, "come forth as gold." In self-will is self-torment, under every blessing and every cross; but when the mind is "reconciled to God," and wishes to be found only in *his will*, it is a sure sign, that it is well, and will be well, with such a soul. Be not anxious when *nature* sinks; the *God* of nature is the same; and I assure you, that when my "flesh has failed," it has been a consideration very consolatory to my mind, that the God in whom I trust, reigns. Yes Jehovah reigns over life and health, disease and death. But (more cheering truth!) *Grace* reigns, over the most *complicated* and *repeated* offences of the soul, the sinful soul, that confides only, and wholly upon the grace of God, displayed in Christ Jesus.

What a mercy to be stripped of fleshly and self-righteous robes—to feel deeply and painfully our insufficiency in strength and worth; and to be constrained by self-emptying, and soul-proving dispensations, to rest in God, only in God, as helpless creatures, and self-condemned sinners. In moments of health and sickness, God has been your hope and help. Courage! my dear friend, courage!—He is still "the God of hope." Cast the anchor of your hope in a Saviour's atonement, and *rest* in that plea for "*forgiveness of sins*." Fix your confidence in his perfect righteousness, and plead that for your *entire* justification. I trust this Saviour's compassion, and power, to support body and mind. Jesus is the source in his love, merit and ability, through all the changes of your frail body and "feeble mind."

"Is any afflicted, let him pray," says the God of mercy. This shows that gracious souls may be afflicted, that God encourages, not their despondency, but their prayers, and that this encouragement is extensive—"is *any* afflicted?" Would he so exhort, if he were inattentive to the prayers of his afflicted ones? No, surely! but he knows, that in affliction it is often hard to believe our prayers acceptable, and, therefore, he says "is any afflicted, let him *pray*."

Pray for me; and in return, I hope to remember you in my poor requests, and our prayers will not be the less acceptable for our trials. With tender and affectionate wishes for you and Mr. Searle,

I am, affectionately your's,

J. Cooke.

LETTER XXVII.—To a Minister.

On Liberality of Sentiment.

Dear Sir,

The occasion of the conversation to which you refer, was Mr. J—'s asking me, if I had any objections to preach for him? To which I answered—not one. He added, that on preaching for an Arminian, he was blamed for not speaking against their tenets. This led me to remark, that I had no objection to preach for a papist—that I would not willingly offend him, but preach my own sentiments freely, as in any other pulpit; without any indecent personal attack on his peculiarities. I added, that I had been blamed and wondered at, for preaching at Chosely that day; but I hated bigotry in all parties, and would never be in bondage to any man, or to any party.

Your name was then mentioned by a brother, and nearly all present united in one sentiment, of what you would do in an Arian pulpit, &c., according to *your* views of faithfulness. All thought that although you would not acknowledge Luther or Calvin, Whitfield or Westley, Fuller or Baxter, for your oracle, yet you actually did this in reference to Dr. Gill, whose name brother H—— *happily* omitted in his sermon! It does appear to all ministers who mention your name, and most private Christians, that your soul is contracted by your system; and, I confess, I think so. But most of them dislike your company, and tell each other so, because they think you narrow and bigotted, and violent in propagating your own ideas, and in opposing those of other good men. For this reason, Mr. M——, Mr. G——, and other ministers have never associated with you; and the hearers of ministers have imbibed the same thoughts and feelings.

Now I am really sorry, because it shuts you out from amiable brethren, and them from the benefit of communion with you. All the ministers in the garden said that you could not maintain your ground, but few perhaps would tell you so. Your saying "blindness *in part* is happened to Israel," is a truth which *both* parties may apply to each other; but such an assertion is not *reasoning*, but *assuming*. I know your ground, for I have walked over it: to *me*, its influence was like *frost*; and I am thankful for that light and liberty, which I allow you to think darkness and bondage.

You are, my dear brother, really an unfair reasoner. You break your friend's sentences, oppose detached parts of his arguments, and are too much agitated and concerned for victory, to prevent you from interrupting your antagonist. And I think, when you are pushed hard, and fairly disarmed, you will not candidly allow the force of a brother's argument, although you evidently feel it, and show it by your countenance, your silence, or your evasions. In the place of an argument you put the charge of Baxterianism, or Fullerism; but this is not stronger as an argument on your side, than the retort of *Gillism* on their side, would be against you.

I think I could have pushed you hard with that text, "and thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, &c." On my own plan, I feel no difficulty in using it; but it does not accord with your system. And I cannot forbear thinking, that your system has blinded your mind relative to the state of Simon Magus.

I did not wonder that Dr. W., for a reward, should have endeavoured to *torture the original* to prove it; but you go much farther, in supposing (if you *really* think so) that our translation proves it! The clause on which you rest your argument will not bear it, much less the word *also*. "And Simon himself believed also." "The devils *also* believe and tremble."

"Simon believed"—a man so ignorant of the Gospel as to attempt to purchase the Spirit of God with a sum of money---so awfully criminal as to induce the Apostle Peter to address him in so singular a manner, as if he were not sure his sin was pardonable—"If, *perhaps*, it may be forgiven;"—A man whose heart was not right, *sincere*, in the sight of God; a man who, from his whole history, appears to have been under the dominion of pride, ambition, covetousness, and hypocrisy; and who showed no sign of real repentance, even after the awful warning of the Apostle—but only appears anxious to

escape punishment—makes no confession of sin—put not up a prayer for himself—was even inferior to *Pharoah*, in the apparent signs of repentance. That such a man, a monster, should be called a Christian ! a believer ! a converted man ! shocks my reason, my feelings, and all my sentiments of God, of Christ, and of his truth; and appears to me most dangerous in its tendency on our hearers.

But believe me, if I did not think your *heart* was better than a system which requires such a perversion of Scripture, I should think myself happy in proportion to my distance from you. But I throw the blame of such violence to God's word, not on your heart but on your system; a system (pity my blindness) which I would not be under, (and I know its influence) for all the wealth of the Indies; a system attended with six or seven evil consequences. It leads you to make God's *secret* will, which does not belong to you, the rule of your preaching, instead of his *revealed* will. It leaves sinners an excuse for their sins, as you say it is not their *duty* to repent, because they are unregenerate characters. It impeaches the sincerity of God, in his invitations, promises and threatenings. It greatly lessens the number of useful arguments in addressing saints and sinners. It is opposite to a system which God has most extensively patronized in the conversion and edification of souls—and it renders some passages of God's word totally inexplicable. As one instance, I ask you to explain the following passage—" Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowlege of the truth."

Now I consider myself, for distinction's sake, to be a Calvinist: yet not Calvin, but Christ is *my* master and *your's*. I will not name other passages. I do not wish for controversy—but I despair of seeing a consistent sense of the above passage on your present principles, to name no other. Admit that you *may* be wrong. Let every past change render you moderate—and believe me

Your's, &c.

J. Cooke.

LETTER XXVIII.—TO AN UNCONVERTED PERSON IN AFFLICTION.

Dear Sir,

GOD grants you space to repent and flee for refuge to Jesus Christ,—the hope set before you. There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved.

To slight this Saviour, is to reject the only remedy. To neglect his great salvation, is the greatest of all sins—a sin which neither Pagans, nor fallen angels, can commit. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for such a soul.

The plan of saving lost souls through the atonement of the Redeemer, is the result of infinite wisdom and love. The unparalleled agonies of the Saviour, when he sweat great drops of blood, falling to the ground,—when he suffered the awful curse due to sin,—illustrates, demonstrates, and glorifies the holiness and justice of God,—proves the awful condition and worth of the soul, to require such a ransom, and the infinite malignity of sin, to require such an atonement. Here also the divine grace and mercy shine, in pardoning freely, fully, and finally, the sinner that rests his hope on this truth, of deliverance from the guilt, the reign, and punishment of sin.

The great enemy of souls seeks your ruin, by flattering you with false hopes, or by tempting you to despair. He may suggest false notions of God to your mind, as if he were too kind to punish the impenitent, so kind as to accept a feigned repentance, or too holy and just to pardon a penitent and believing sinner. He will attempt to ruin you, by diverting you from "the things which belong to your peace," by trifling amusements, the cares of business, the flatteries of friends, the frivolous conversation of visitors, or the delusive promises of *future* days you may never see, and future exertions you may never make. He tempts us to be ashamed of Christ, and to fear the cross in following him Now---it is too soon, then---too late, to surrender our souls to the teaching, the saving power, and gracious government of him, who is able to save to the uttermost. But he who is the wonderful counsellor, and "mighty to save,"—can expose and defeat his stratagems, arm you with wisdom and strength to escape, to conquer his temptations, and settle your soul in a calm, immoveable and delightful confidence on his mercy, faithfulness and power.

Now pour out your soul in some such words as these :—

God of infinite mercy! behold a poor lost sinner, burdened with disease, and sin, and grief. Pity my distressed spirit,—pardon my guilt, and purify my heart from sinful affections. Unworthy as I am of thy favour, I plead forgiveness through the sacrifice of atonement, which the great Redeemer has offered to thy justice. Thou hast promised that whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins,—shall never perish,—shall have eternal life! Lord help my feeble and fearful soul to believe in him, and to enjoy the blessedness of the man, whose transgression is forgiven. Enable me to resign my wife, my children, and all my mortal interests to thy wise, equitable, and gracious providence. Fortify my mind patiently to bear my trials, to wait for thy salvation, to conquer the fears of death, and the love of life. If I am spared, let my remaining days be devoted to thy will; and if this affliction should terminate my earthly existence, " Lord Jesus! receive my spirit."

Your's, faithfully,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XXIX.—TO DOCTOR POULTON.

Dear Sir,

UNFEIGNED concern for your welfare, and the consolation of an affectionate wife, so deeply interested in your present trial, suggested the propriety of sending you this letter.

I have long observed the dispensations of divine providence towards you. In temporal things, God hath prospered you; and it is no uncommon thing, for prosperity to become a snare, by *sensualizing* the affections and elating the mind with false hopes of increasing and long continued comfort on earth. This is the common, " waking dream" of prosperity; and when affliction is sent as a *blessing*, it removes the glare from worldly objects, and the film from our eyes: " the snare is then broken, and we are delivered." It is then the afflicted man feels Solomon's description of this world, in its full force,—" All is vanity and vexation of spirit."—Then the mind can enter into the spirit and importance of our Lord's words, addressed to me and to you—" What shall it profit a man, though

he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Unsanctified prosperity, defies and enslaves, deceives and enfeebles the mind. But sanctified sufferings rouse the mind from its lethargy, shake its presumptuous hopes to their foundations,—disturb its false peace, its "treacherous calm," and direct its chief concern to its spiritual and eternal interests. Blessed affliction! which through divine grace, disposes a sufferer to mourn over the duties he has omitted, the opportunities he has lost, the sins he has committed, and the mercies he has abused! Salutary pain! by which a man "comes to himself,"—looks by faith to the Saviour, smites his guilty breast crying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Interesting dispensation of infinite wisdom and goodness! under which a fallen creature becomes acquainted with himself, with God, and with the book of God; and estimating the society, the opinions, and the pursuits of the world, in the light of scripture and of eternity, yields himself to God, through a Mediator, as his *sovereign Lord* and *sovereign good*. Are you, my dear sir, *disposed* to seek the Lord, while he may be found; to call upon him, whilst he is near? Are you inclined to listen to the voice of God in his word addressed to a sinful creature in trouble, even should that trouble have been the natural effect of his own folly and sin? Then take courage, God is all-sufficient! he can restore your body and save your soul, with "an everlasting salvation." If you make him your refuge in trouble, he will save your soul; perhaps, he may also restore your health. Thus runs the divine counsel:—"Is any afflicted? let him *pray*: let him not *presume* on medical assistance, or his own prudence, like King Asa, who sought to the physicians, and not to the Lord: 2 Chron. xvi. 12. Let him not *presume*, but pray, for the success of the wisest agents, and the efficacy of the best means, are dependant on the divine will; let him pray and not *despair*; "for nothing is too hard for the Lord." You read the divine *encouragement* to follow this council in the fiftieth psalm, in the following words:—"Call upon me, in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Endeavour, dear sir, in the day of your trouble, to follow the Lord's counsel, and receive his encouragement:—pour out your soul; your very *soul*, with all its sins and sorrows, its desires and fears,—to that God who never said to the seed of Jacob, nor to any children of Adam, "Seek ye me in vain"—you have

attended me in bodily disease and pain, when I expected my great change, a change of worlds! O that you, and your's, may feel that seasonable and proportionable succour, by which I was then enabled to think of death without dread, and of heaven with lively hope; to confide in the power, grace, and faithfulness of God in Christ, for pardon, consolation, and strength. Committing you, and the afflicted partner of your joys and sorrows, to the compassion of an infinite God,

I am, with real sympathy, truly your's,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXX.—TO MR. H. KEMBLE.

Dear Sir,

I FEEL myself greatly obliged by your letter, which contained so large a portion of Mr. C.'s sermon to young persons. I suppose it is your first effort. Not indeed from the letter itself, for that, to a person unacquainted with the writer, would suppose it to be the result of a habit in writing sermons. I despise flattery, but really think your letter does honour to your understanding. "Every good gift is from above," should be gratefully acknowledged, and improved, as a talent for which we must account to the Great Sovereign of our persons, our abilities, and our advantages. I would seriously recommend the cultivation of your ability to write sermons, from those advantages which may be derived from it. It will strengthen the disposition of thinking with order: and the proper *arrangement* of our thoughts, on the different parts of a subject, is of no small importance in the pursuit of knowledge. Some persons hear without thinking; others think with confusion; but few think with any profitable method in the disposition of their thoughts.

This practice will also accustom you to *examine principles*, to think closely, and establish your judgment, by rejecting evidence which is false, doubtful, or weak; and furnish your memory with truths, which may afford you future entertainment and benefit, whilst it qualifies you to communicate pleasure and edification to others, in whose gratification, on such subjects, you may feel inter-

ested. But the consideration which most forcibly recommends this custom, is the *effects* which may be produced on your mind, by such familiarity with objects, with which the most valuable interests of your being require you to be intimately conversant. The great truths you will hear explained, illustrated, confirmed, and improved, will, through a divine blessing, guard your judgment from fatal errors, shield your heart from the perilous temptations of the world, and prove sources of support and consolation the most substantial and permanent, when your "heart and flesh shall fail." Your intercourse with the world will now rapidly increase. Some persons will be found, to whose mind religion is beneath praise or blame; *indifference* is the offspring of the most dangerous *ignorance*. Others will boldly condemn the Bible without examination, because the Bible condemns *them*; and the inconsistencies, and self-contradictions, which they *pretend* to find in the book of God, you will, without labour, discern in their dispositions, conversation, and pursuits. The true secret you will perceive is, that the reigning love of sin, and of the Bible which condemns it, cannot exist in the same heart. The frivolous and the gay worldling is absorbed by trifles; whilst the avaricious, the ambitious, and the sensualist, secure the present time for the acquisition of money, power, honour, or pleasure.

In the light of Revelation you will see their folly, their sin, their misery, and their end! One glance at such characters, in the light of eternity, will strike your mind with a thousand reasons to pity them; and "lay fast hold on divine instruction," as your best guard against their ignorance and infidelity; their pride and sensuality; their insignificance, their sin, and their punishment. By a familiar intercourse with the objects of divine revelation, you will possess a perpetual source of the most interesting information, the noblest enjoyments, and improvement of character. This will make you scorn to be indebted to a play, a novel, or any other fashionable folly for an hour's recreation. *Time*, in its reference to God, the soul, the judgment day, and eternity, will appear infinitely important, and claim redemption from scenes so insipid, so criminal, and so hazardous. In fine, a serious and frequent attention to the duty I am now recommending, may be blessed to enable you to look back upon your principles, your disposition, and conduct, with self-approbation and gratitude, millions of ages hence. "Tis good to contemplate our *future* selves!"

Wishing you that grace, which shall enable you to enjoy a prospect of eternal happiness in Heaven, and qualify your character in this world, to bear an eternal review without pain or fear.

I am your sincere friend,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXXI.—TO A FRIEND.

Illustration of 1 *Cor.* ii. 9.

My Dear Friend,

THE quotation 1 Cor. ii. 9, from Isa. lxiv. 4, does not refer to *heaven*, as *generally* stated, and *particularly* in the "*Remarks;*" for the loan of which accept my thanks. No! What eye had never seen, was "God manifest in the flesh,"—God with a human face! God with a human voice! God *in our nature*, obeying the *moral* law, and, more, *the mediatorial law!* This law was "the will of God, that the Son of God, in our nature, should bear the *sin* and *curse* of his people; and redeem them from both these evils." They had seen Moses; God in *creation*, God in *providence*, God in *miracles*, God in the ceremonial and moral law, God in judgments and mercies temporal,—but never, never saw "God manifest in the flesh,"—IMMANUEL! Here is the true "glory of Jehovah," in Christ crucified, ver. 2. "The wisdom of God," long a mystery, ver. 7. "The deep things of God," ver. 10.

Before the INCARNATION of the Son of God, did the eye ever see "God in human flesh?" Did the ear ever hear it, until God reported it? Did the heart ever conceive it? No! A heathen philosopher said,—If God and man should converse, man must become God, or God become man! but he never expected it, much less saw it. But God has *revealed* the latter. Here is "the brightness of the Father's glory," Heb. i. 1—3.

The fullness of the Godhead bodily; and he who hath seen him, hath seen or perceived the Father! God in my nature magnifying the law, atoning for sin, redeeming the soul, bestowing the Holy Spirit—giving me a *title* to heaven in his righteousness, a *meetness* for heaven by his sanctifying influence, and *conducting* me to heaven by his word, his providence, his grace, and his *example*. Such

love, such grace, such a redemption, such a salvation, for lost, lost man, never, never, never entered into his heart to conceive.

If *this* demonstration of the Spirit to the love of God, fails to convince, to satisfy, to overpower the soul—to encourage, relieve, transform, establish, elevate, and transport it, to what evidence can we refer? If this be received, how can distrust live, and fear prevail. For,

"If IMMANUEL'S face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His NAME FORBIDS my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins!"

The *incarnation*,—"the word made flesh," and dwelling among us, revealing, performing, and suffering the will of the Father, for the redemption and salvation of man,—these are the things of which the Jews themselves, in general, had no conception, much less the Pagan sages. Many, however, "*waited* for this salvation," anticipated "this DAY," which Jesus called "*my* day," with the joy of faith. And now "they that *love* him," and they only, can enjoy these "*things prepared*."

The *medium* is REVEALED truth; WORDS of the Spirit; "*My words*," saith the Saviour. Dwell for an hour on John, xiv. 21, 22, 23. Then read, believe, meditate on, pray over, "keep his word;" and mark the promise, "I will *manifest* myself to him!"

Kind regards to Mr. and Mrs. Walker, and Mrs. Bridgewater.

Your's, &c.

J. COOKE.

LETTER XXXII.—TO A FRIEND.

On the Strivings of the Spirit.

Dear Sir,

YOUR letter demanded an earlier answer, and you should have received one, had not the Sunday-school Society called me to London. Accept my thanks for your letter, as an accomplishment of your promise, and for the freedom of communication, and the natural ease of its style. It appears that God has been striving with you from your childhood, by your parents, the Gospel Ministry, valuable books and afflictive dispensations. This striving of the Spirit of

God, is, in my opinion, more or less felt in the conscience of every person, righteous and wicked. It has often been objected to this, that God never strives, but upon the minds of *his elect*; and that it is a proposition involving absurdity, if not blasphemy, to suppose Omnipotence should strive and *not prevail*. But such persons must be inattentive to the plain meaning of the voice of Scripture, which in reference to the most licentious characters, said, " My spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh. Gen. vi. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8.

The meaning of the term *strive*, has been equally misunderstood; and one person has argued against another, as if God strove physically, and must prevail, as a strong man in striving with a weak one. But God strives *morally*, as a *witness*, by faithful testimony; as an advocate by seasonable and rational pleas;—as a *governor*, by righteous laws;—as a judge, by passing sentence upon impenitent and unbelieving sinners; and as a *Saviour*, by pressing invitations, faithful promises, melting expostulations, and alarming warnings.

Thus it appears, that God has been striving with you, from a very early period of life. From this part of the divine conduct, we may account for the power of *conscience* in the wicked; deep convictions which *restrain* them from the execution of their evil purposes,—fears of future punishment,—strong cries for mercy,—self-reproach,—anticipations of the sentence at the judgment seat,—resolutions of amendment under threatening disorders—and desire of the counsels and prayers of Christians, whom in health they despised. These moral strivings have the most beneficial influence in the government of the world, although they should not terminate in the conversion of the soul. They are worthy of the holiness and goodness of the divine character, as their tendency is to expose the evil of sin—to suppress, or prevent it: and they will afford a vindication of the righteous conduct of God, and prove an aggravation of their abuse and goodness.

But, if even the *wicked* may be the subjects of such strivings, and of their effects, how may we distinguish these from those operations of the spirit of God, which are peculiar to the heirs of salvation?—To this I answer—by the *quality* and *permanency* of the effects produced by his sacred influence on the mind. By the quality rather than the *degrees* of these effects: for degrees rather distinguish one Christian from another, than a Christian from an unconverted man. And indeed, the constituted apathy in one man, and ardour in ano-

ther, might induce us to believe the babe in Christ, a possessor of more grace than the most mature christian; as the fire of the former is generally more ardent than that of the latter. The love of *sin* is natural to fallen man, as the affection to *holiness* is to a renewed man. It is as impossible for an unconverted man to hate sin and love holiness, as for a converted man to love sin. A holy principle, or disposition, manifests itself in aversion to sin, grief for the least inclination to it, and steady opposition to its power. Such a mind appears under the power of grace, by its believing application to Christ for strength against the force of sin, and righteousness to justify him from its condemning power.

This pure effect of gracious influence accords with the work of Christ, which was to take away sin; with the office of the Spirit, as the Spirit of holiness; with the *promises* that sin shall not have dominion; with the character of God, as glorious in holiness; and with heaven itself, for which it makes them meet. No one, therefore, can rationally entertain a single doubt, for a moment, that holiness is an effect of special grace. Sin dwells in the Christian: he perceives and feels it, as a burden, from which he sighs to be delivered; as an enemy which he desires to destroy; as a disease for which he seeks a cure; as a defilement from which he endeavours to be cleansed; as a vexatious inmate, which he resolves to expel.

Your's, &c.

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXXIII.—TO SIR EGERTON LEIGH.

Dear Sir Egerton,

SINCE I saw and prayed with you at Maidenhead, you have seldom been long from my thoughts. The extreme weakness of your body, the coldness of the weather, the length of your journey, and the determination of your mind to proceed, left little hope in me or Mr. Bishop, that you would reach Newbury. The thought of dying in your carriage, or at an inn, to a mind borne up by supernatural aid, was a mere circumstance in your esteem. I rejoiced to hear you say, "I am in the Lord's hands;—I look to a better world;"—My heart travelled with you, and I went home and relieved my mind

by venting my tears of sympathy, in fervent prayer that, "as your day, so your strength might be."

I am amazed at your reaching Bath.—I am thankful that you are accompanied by faithful and tender servants, who watch every expression of your will, and anticipate your wants: and am greatly obliged by the letter of this morning, which one of them (whose name I know not) sent me.

Remember Him, my dear Sir Egerton, who remembers you in your low estate. He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The same in his faithfulness to his promise,—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,"—the same in his affectionate sympathy and all-sufficient grace. The same in his wisdom, to regulate all your trials, your changes, and your end. The same in his power to support your mind, shield you in your conflicts, and render you superior to the fear of death. Now is the time to rely on his atoning blood for pardon;—for pardon in its completeness, freeness, perpetuity, and influence. Now is the time to honour his righteousness for justification and peace with God. Now, in "this time of need," look through the dignity, merit, and intercession of Jesus, to the Father on "a throne of grace; that you may obtain mercy, and *find grace* to help you." You have no voice; but God looketh on the heart. "He hears the *desire* of the humble." "His ear attends the softest call."

I will not forget you, but commend you with imploring earnestness, to the all-sufficiency, the infinite mercy, and parental providence, of your heavenly Father.

Your race is near the end,—your conflicts are almost finished. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth you. Look up to him in humble confidence, pleading, "thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake thou not the work of thine own hands." Forget not that your *trying* "times are in his hands."

That the Lord, in blessing, may bless you, with the enjoyment of forgiveness, acceptance, and the lively hope of eternal life;—that he may support your patience, your resignation, your gratitude, and your peace of mind, is the fervent prayer of him, whom you affectionately called

Your dear Brother,

JOHN COOKE.

P. S. Your kind servant will write again. If the Rev. Mr. Jay

of Bath, is at home, his visits would be highly interesting to you. "He is a faithful man, and fears God, above many."

LETTER XXXIV.—TO A YOUNG MAN WHO MET WITH AN ALARMING ACCIDENT.

My Young Friend,

ON my return from Abingdon, I was informed that you had fallen from your horse, and received an injury. The following thoughts occurred to my mind on the subject; and to show you that you have a place there, I transcribe them for your sake. "A horse is counted but a vain thing for safety"—yea, is often the instrument of man's death! Creatures then, are good or evil to us, as the Lord makes them to be one or the other. How precarious our worldly comforts! A youth, near twenty, in danger of losing his breath by a fall from a horse! After all the care of parents, how soon the fruit of their anxious attention may be blasted.

Our obligations to divine providence are singularly great. God has *warned* you, by casting you to the brink of death; and *preserved* you, I trust, to improve his goodness through your future life. You went out cheerful—you came home sad. What a mercy, that the fall which broke a bone, did not break your neck!

> "Tis to his care we owe our breath,
> And all our near escapes from Death."

How necessary for our safety and comfort, to be found *only* in the path of duty. Then, whatever we meet with, we may attribute to a kind providence, without the severe self-reproach of having brought on our disasters, by rebellion against God. I do not intimate that you were not then in the path of duty; but suggest the consequent reflection if you had not been so. The incident may also remind you, how near we dwell to eternity! since the stumbling of a horse may dispatch us, in a moment, from the stage of time. I dare venture to say, that the event has occasioned an inquiry to be instituted in your breast, like the following:—"What, if in falling from my horse, I had lost my life---was I *prepared* to go? should I have "died in the Lord?" How has my mind been occupied lately by the best things!

Have I had a growing sense of their importance? Or has a sense of my obligations lessened? Have I manifested an attention to the means of grace, equal to former days? Does this awfully kind providence overtake me in a supine, careless, indifferent frame of soul? Or am I found, under this double act of judgment and mercy, happy in Christ, and in experimental nearness to God? Whenever you pass, or recollect the place, where your horse threw you, and God preserved you—may you be able to raise a grateful Ebenezer. For "in the shadow of his hand has he preserved you." Wilt thou not from *this* time cry unto God—my Father! thou art the guide of my youth? Wishing you the power of the Spirit of grace, to improve a gracious providence, to your constant dependence on God, and devotedness to him,

I am, with most affectionate wishes,

Your's,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XXXV.—TO A MINISTER UNKNOWN.

On Natural and Moral Impotency.

My dear Sir,

FROM the conversation which passed between us, when I had the pleasure of dining with you, it appears, that I think it is the duty of all who hear the gospel, to *believe* it: you think it is not, because they have not ability to believe it. This difference of opinion affords an occasion of mutual candour and forbearance, in allowing *equal sincerity* in each other. We both desire to know the mind of God. As our opinions are opposite, one must be false; and as neither of us can be *infallible*, it is possible that either of us may be wrong. You think I am mistaken, and I think the error is in your mind. We both appeal to the word of God, which testifies that no man, without the grace of God, can perform one spiritual act. In this we agree. You infer from this doctrine, that it cannot be the duty of a sinner to believe the word of God,—to love God,—to believe in Christ, to repent of his sins. This, I think is a doctrinal error of a very pernicious tendency.

First—Because it makes man's ability, the measure of his obligations; in which case, the greatest sinners are under the least obligations, as in proportion to the strength of *sinful habits*, is a sinner's moral or spiritual weakness.

This appears to me to be to annul the revealed will and authority of God, who wherever the gospel is preached, "commands all men every where to repent"—not with a hypocritical, but sincere repentance. He commanded Simon Magus to "*repent* of his wickedness," with that repentance which would justify a hope, that he might be "*forgiven*." To this repentance, John the Baptist exhorted "a generation of vipers;" and "to bring forth fruits MEET for repentance;" that is, answerable to the nature and tendency of genuine repentance; and so "flee from the wrath to come!"

Secondly—The weakness of a sinner is a *criminal* weakness; not an excusable frailty; and, therefore, leaves him "*without excuse*." We allow this in sins against *ourselves*. A covetous man *cannot* be liberal;—a lascivious man, *cannot* be chaste;—a dishonest man, *cannot* be just;—a proud man, *cannot* love humility;—a malicious man, *cannot* be kind;—a slothful man, *cannot* love work;—an implacable man *cannot* forgive. But is this criminal inability a rule of duty? Do you excuse it? Is it not the duty of each to repent, and prove their repentance, by corresponding fruits?

Shall we condemn ourselves by those principles which we allow? Is any man more able to obey the second table of the law,—his duty to his neighbour—than the first, which requires his duty to God? But because man has lost his power to obey, has God forfeited his power to command? Would not this prove, that it is not the duty of fallen man to love God? And if so, prove it is not his sin, to hate him? Is it an excuse, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and, therefore, not his *duty* to love him?

Your's, &c.,

JOHN COOKE.

Letter XXXVI.

Admonition to an Unbeliever.

Dear Sir,

The hour of affliction will try your principles. Will reason then support you? Appeal to *fact*. You have been tried by health and prosperity; and you live without thought of God, your soul, and eternity.

You have been *afflicted;* but as you did not apprehend danger, and recovered, you still went on in a course of sin.

You were seized with a disease that threatened life. You trembled, wept, vowed to God, if spared, you would improve your time in seeking your salvation.

The Lord "spared you to recover your strength," and you were more careless and hardened. True,—you did read the word of God, and attended the house of God for a short time; but your diligence was "as the morning cloud or early dew, which goeth away," on the rising of the sun.

You have sighed over your own condition, when witnessing the sufferings and deaths of others;—you have seen their faith in Christ, their patience, their lively hope, their gratitude, their joy in God; but you are still the slave of sin. And what do these experiments demonstrate?

The strength of your sin, the weakness of your soul,—the all-sufficiency of the grace of God, and your need of it. This is "the one thing needful." Without it you may suffer and recover—or suffer, and be stupified by medicine, and under its power, sleep the sleep of death, or die in despair. But be assured, that no other aid than the grace of God, can wean you from sin, the love of the world, and life. No other influence can raise you above the pressure of trouble, the fear of death, or the dark uncertainty of futurity.

You laugh at *experience*, Christian experience, or *proof* of the power of divine truth, and the grace of God which it reveals. But *you* have experience too. You have proved the weakness and insufficiency of your principles; and they have left you in the trying moment overwhelmed with gloomy despondency.

You have tried unbelief, conjecture, depraved reason. You have *proved* the insufficiency of prosperity, sufferings, convictions, and resolutions. This is the *experience* of a SINNER. Cast the anchor of hope on the Saviour; endeavour to trust the promise of God, and cry to God for "mercy and grace to help you in the time of need. This plan you have never tried; the only one which never failed. Christian experience worketh hope; your experience produces despair. Be assured, until the grace of God is your refuge and strength, you will be the slave of sin, the subject of tormenting fears, driven and tossed by the waves of trouble, borne on by the tide of temptation, and flee to some "refuge of lies." Soon your nerves will be unstrung, your strength will fail; and the recollection of past folly, in wishing to be saved from *thinking* of your danger, will end in "a fearful looking for of judgment!" Pause, think, read the word of God, associate with good men, pray for mercy, and dwell on the thoughts of eternity. Eternity, eternity in heaven or hell! It is not yet too late. Come to the Saviour; for "now is the accepted time; behold! now is the day of salvation."

Your's faithfully,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XXXVII.—TO A FRIEND.

On Saving Faith.

My dear Friend,

YOUR estimate of saving faith, in its effects, is too contracted. If you believe in the representation of your *danger*, as a sinner, you flee from it, as from the avenger of blood, to the city of refuge. If you *believe* a *promise*, you wait in hope of its accomplishment. If you believe in the *all-sufficiency* and *grace* of Christ, you *trust* in both for present relief.

If you believe that Christ will "in no wise," on no consideration, "cast you out;" you will, you must "come to him," for a cordial acceptance, If you believe "there is *forgiveness* with God," through the atonement and intercession of Christ, you will expect and implore it.

If you believe in the equitable, wise, powerful, and kind *providence* of Christ, however obscure, you will commit all your temporal and spiritual interests and comforts to him; and, with patient resignation, accommodate yourself to his unerring and faithful arrangements, with "thy will be done."

If you believe in the *love* and *authority* of Christ to control you, yielding to his revealed will, following his counsel and imitating his example; you will feel obedience to him, your honour, your interest, and your happiness, in every period and condition of your existence. If you believe in his *perfect righteousness* and *power*, you will look to him for justification and strength. If you really believe in the *divinity* of his *person* and the *perfection* of his *atoning sacrifice*, you will hope in him for redemption and forgiveness.

If you believe in his *dominion* over all flesh and spirits, good and evil, you will repose in him an unbounded confidence for security, support, and deliverance. If you believe in his *sympathy*, and *wisdom*, and *ability*, you will pray to him for supernatural succour, comfort, victory, sanctification, and deliverance, in all your temptations, persecutions, and afflictions. If you believe in his *promised presence*, where two or three are gathered together in his name, you will, if possible, make one of the number.

If you believe that he is "the *same*" in his affectionate purpose, his infinite merit, and his mediatorial ability, you will rise above discouragement from your changing frames and outward condition, and feel your doubts removed, your fears suppressed, and your gloom dispersed. If you believe he has "the keys of death and of the unseen world," and is faithful to his word, you will rely, without wavering, on his truth, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life!" Fear not; "this is the promise which he hath promised us,—EVEN ETERNAL LIFE!"

In a word, faith will always produce effects answerable to the *nature* of the truth believed, and the degree of credit given to it.

I am, your's, &c.

J. COOKE.

LETTER XXXVIII.—TO A FRIEND UNDER BEREAVEMENT.

My dear Friend,

"WAS ever sorrow like unto my sorrow!" Let us examine your case? Have you lost a beautiful and only son? So have I. Have you been bereaved of lovely daughters? So have I. Have you parted with an affectionate wife? So have I. Have you but one prop of your family left? My dear wife, four daughters and one son, have left me. Has death struck your friend? And several of mine, that were "as my own soul." Did you feel the bereavement imposing silence on yourself and friends, because your grief was great?" So did Job. Does grief break your rest, impair your health, exhaust your spirits, threaten your life and darken your prospects? This is "common to man;" and even to good men. Have you lost your children by sudden death? Your property by plunderers? Your friends by prejudice? Your wife's favour by suffering and reproach. Your health, by disease? So did Job: and yet "all worked together" for his honour, happiness, and usefulness. "He saw the END of the Lord," and proved him to be "very pitiful and of tender mercy!"

Or are you *young* and bereaved of father and mother, uncle, aunt and cousin, without a relation in the world? So was I.

"When father, mother and friends left me, then the Lord took me up;" and conducted me through childhood and youth, to become a husband and a father; and then took my wife and five children, at the ages of four, five, to twenty-five years. Do you ask how I obtained power to assuage my anguish in successive bereavements? I answer—in the word of God, and in the house of God.

Read his words, Isaiah lvi. 4, 5. Unto them that "choose the things that please me; and take hold of my covenant," that is of Christ and the promises by faith; "even unto them will I give within my house and within my walls, a place, and a name, BETTER than of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, which shall not be CUT OFF." And what NAME is that, which survives all earthly relations, and which shall never, as they are, be cut off! The name of A CHILD OF GOD! with all the *honours* and *privileges*, the *prospects* and *inheritance*, promised to every child and heir.

Faith in the atonement, righteousness, and all-sufficient grace of

the Redeemer and Saviour. Faith in the truth, the providence and perfections of God, as a FATHER, will bear up the soul, bear it onward to that world, "where its inhabitants neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God!"

Will any one of these sons of God, these saints in light *die*?—No! "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; for the FORMER things, are passed away!"

"If you were a child of God, you should not be so bereaved and otherwise tried." These are *your* words. "If ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers;" that is all the children of God, "then are ye bastards and not sons." These are the words of GOD. Have you considered the *advantages* of divine, paternal chastisements?

They *awaken* the drowsy mind to *concern* for *spiritual* blessings. Renew the exercise of repentance, call forth the *desires* of the soul in importunate *prayer*—render the judgment sound to estimate spiritual and eternal things—excite a *tender sympathy* for other sufferers—expose the fallacy and danger of wordly opinions, praises, and censures.

Sanctified afflictions expose the *evil of sin*, in its guilt, pollution, aggravation and consequences. They lead us to *the word of God* for counsel and comfort; impress on us the value and necessities of a lost soul; quicken our attention to the *invitations* of the Saviour, to come to him, believe in him; afford encouragement to trust and plead his promises of pardon and eternal life, to *all* that "come to him;" and qualify them to embrace the assurance given, that "whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out," and by making us feel our *unworthiness* and *insufficiency*, they endear the ALL-SUFFICIENCY of the GRACE of Christ," to pardon, purify, sustain and save us.

These blessed sufferings teach us, that God hath not given an unlimitted commission to disease and death, and Satan; but show the power and mercy of God, his forbearance, wisdom, grace and faithfulness, in sparing health, or life, or friends, or remaining blessings—at least in sparing the greatest of all our interests, the soul and a day of grace. Bereaved, suffering Christian, God's design is not to *please* you. "He afflicts you for your PROFIT, that you may be partaker of *his* holiness!" You desire to have this testimony, that God pleases *you*:" Enoch had this testimony that, "by faith, he pleased GOD."—Which is right?

A lady on receiving the news that two beloved children were drowned, exclaimed, in faith in the goodness and wisdom of God, "I see thou wilt have all my heart, and thou shalt have it." Here, here is the patience, the resignation and triumph of the saints. This is the glory of the religion of Jesus! This is religion; the effect worthy of its CAUSE; "the SPIRIT of glory, resting on us!"

Your's, &c.,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XXXIX.—TO ONE WHO HAD COMPLAINED OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Dear Sir,

YOU ask me in your last letter, What *is providence*? I frankly acknowledge, that I do not expect to satisfy *you* in my answer, although half as many thoughts would satisfy any inquirer under a good temper. Do not be *angry*,—I am *sincere* at least in what I write, when I hazard the disclosure of my views to you. *I do* really think, that under your *present* feelings I shall not please you. You are evidently lifted up and cast down, more by *appearance* than by *principle*. To-day you seem to understand providence, because it seems to accommodate your temper, your desires, and your plan. To-morrow it may not be less favourable to your interests in a different way; but viewed through your *senses*, your *passions*, and your disposition to *prescribe rules* for God to work by, you are disappointed, vexed, and discouraged, because God works after the counsel of his own will, and not by *your's*. Were you as solicitous, that "the only wise God" should *form your plan* of acting in your business, as *you* are prayerful that he should bless the plan *you* form for his providence, "your soul would dwell at ease." But you *distrust* his understanding, his goodness, and his promise. You read, and hear, and converse on providence, hoping that God will *please you*, and sometimes he *does* please you; and then you sing "Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide." But an unexpected event alarms your fears, excites your repining thoughts, and darkens your prospects—now, it is not "JEHOVAH Jireh;" but "I Jireh:" you must foresee and provide. On this plan, despondency quickly paralyses your exertions; and the *business* or the *place* must be changed,

and a trial made, where you shall receive more encouragement. A little brisker trade composes your nerves; and trade, a little diminished for a few days, will agitate them. Then again customers are fickle, providence is obscure, the situation is unfavourable, and "you do not know what to make of providence." Unhappy in yourself, "a troubled spring" to your friends, an obscure text to your fellow Christians, and a stumbling block to unbelievers, you provoke God to hedge up your way with thorns. In this state of things, if "given up to your own counsel," temptation may assail you, by promising appearances, which may lead to a false step, hastily taken, which by concealed consequences, may involve you in tenfold perplexities; and you may learn too late, that "the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord." You will then look back on your distrust of God, your repining disposition, and murmuring tongue; and perhaps learn, though by painful experience, that the error of your *heart* and *way* has been, a concern that God in his providence might *please you*, instead of a supreme concern to PLEASE HIM, by a believing, patient, self-denying accommodation of yourself to his paternal dispensation. Without faith, you may please yourself, and be "a man-pleaser;" but "without faith, it is impossible to please God;" or to be pleased with, and derive profit from, his kindest dispensations.

Your's faithfully,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XL.—TO A PERSON WHO HAD COMPLAINED OF A DEFECTIVE MEMORY.

Dear Sir,

YOU complain of a bad memory, and the want of enjoyment in the *best* things. This I can *account* for; but God alone can cure it. I account for your good memory in some things by *attention* to them, and your *enjoyment* which accompanies your attention. You have this afternoon paid a tea visit—you say you *very much enjoyed* it; and you have equally enjoyed the *relation* of it. Your memory retains the account of all you heard. The persons who want servants—servants that have left their places—those who have the bailiffs in their houses—the old customers your friend

has lost—new ones which supply their places; you recollect the diseases and deaths in families—the legacies left, and the quarrels of the relations; who is confined, and who is brought to bed with sons and daughters; you have heard several stories which you deem slanders, and slanders which you believe to be true; you say Mrs. ——— has been unfaithful to her husband; Mr. Q. has been arrested, and Miss W. is to be married on Monday; Mr. L's servant has defrauded him, and the doctors have pronounced Mr. V.'s brother incurable. What a retentive memory where your *attention* is rivetted by what pleases you! Did religion possess an equal interest in your affections, your attention would be proportionably engaged, your memory would retain, and your tongue with equal readiness express, your feelings on divine subjects. But alas! your *head* is in the region of trifles; "you mind earthly things," and out of the abundance of your heart your mouth speaketh." Men remember what they love, and what they hate. The *heart* governs the *thoughts* and *words;* the *actions* and the memory. Here is the *true* cause of complaint; for "out of the heart are the issues of life."

Your's faithfully,

J. Cookl.

Letter XLI.—To Mr. Edwards.

Written during a Tempest.

London, July 16.—10 o'Clock.

My dear Sir,

The thunder of God's power is rolling over my head, and "the glittering sword" of his lightning, renders the room daylight. I really forget my subject. I was going to say "God speaketh in affliction, *once*, yea *twice*; and man, with his ears stopped by *the world in his ear*,—"man perceiveth it not." You learn, my dear sir, from the 107th Psalm, that God *delivers* the worst of men; but he does not *teach* and *bless* them. Many are afflicted, and *alarmed*, but not *blessed*; and at length they are afflicted, and *not alarmed*. This is a proof that affliction has *hardened* their hearts: and if these persons conclude, as many do, that because they suffer *here*, they

shall not suffer *hereafter*, they are hardened indeed! God doth not say, as many as I chasten I love; but, "as many as I *love* I *chasten*." The *fruit* must prove the relation of sons.

Sometimes a child of God may think he is so *afflicted*, he cannot be *beloved*. This is judging by *sense*, and not by faith. If by faith in the mercy of God, through the atonement of Christ, we enjoy *forgiveness* of *sin*, this makes afflictions light: for as "Sin is the STING of DEATH," and without which death is a *shadow*; so sin is the sting of *pain*, of *disease*, of *poverty*, and of *every* trial. We must rest in the *decision* of *God's word*; that *prosperity* is no sign of his favour; for "his sun shines on *the evil*." Nor is a freedom from sickness, *nor deliverance from trouble*, a proof of divine regard. The Psalmist does not say, "Blessed is the man whom God *delivers from trouble*," but "whom he chastens and *teaches*."

"The fire of a *fever* may be extinguished, and the fire of hell prepared for a sinner," said an author.

On the other hand, the men of the world "judge after the sight of their eyes;" and to them, the *afflicted* appear the *miserable*. If affliction be sanctified, it sanctifies us. Then "we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." Never then, my dear sir, seek relief of mind, by hoping to be *better*: yet, if the Lord will, he can bless thee with *speedy* recovery, *possible* to *none* but *himself*,—2 Cor. iv. 16--18. *Faint* not; look to *eternal* things, and this formidable dropsy shall work for you—a weight of glory. Not by *merit*; but by *meetness*.—Col. i. 12.

Affliction is "common to men," even to *good* men; and by being common, it excites a *sympathy*, a fellow feeling, of man for man. The days of affliction in age, are, by Solomon, called "EVIL days." —Eccles. xii. 1. This, however, I am sure of, that they are *not* evil days to those who "seek God in the day of their distress." No! no! they are days of GRACE! days of SALVATION! O! what a fund of mercy! what a bank of grace! to a distressed mind, in a diseased body,—"Behold! now is the ACCEPTED time: behold! *now*———is the day of SALVATION! Value *every hour*; it is—*a space to repent!*"

With the tenderest sympathy for you and Mrs. E.,

I am, unfeignedly, your's,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XLII.—TO CAPTAIN WILSON, OF THE MISSIONARY SHIP, DUFF.

Dear Sir,

MY friends at Maidenhead, are quite disappointed in not having your company amongst them, and hope you will soon pay us a visit.

Yet I cannot refrain from acknowledging your kind, and unreserved communication relative to Otaheite, for which I feel myself much obliged. I thought before I saw you, that the appearances of GOD on your behalf; and the numerous attentions of men on your return, might so absorb your mind for a time, as with caresses from the creature, to occasion great "leanness of soul." No doubt Satan would "exalt you above measure." But I believe, God who is jealous of his honour, and tender of your peace and usefulness, has given "Grace sufficient for you."

I am sure you must be glad to retire from the world, even from the religious world, to a certain degree, to enjoy converse with God and yourself. I admire the providential care of God over you, and your charge; and especially in "keeping you in the hour of temptation." A soul in *union* with Christ, receives from him "the spirit of might," in measure proportioned to his dangers, wants and duties. You have felt what the grace of Christ *can* do. This should encourage you, against *future* seasons of temptations. Will you forgive me if I say, "Watch and pray; that you enter not into temptation." From a little knowledge of Satan's devices, I should not wonder if he should *attempt* to lull you into carnal security, and self-confidence; and then follow you with temptations to the very sin from which you have been so mercifully preserved. Eve said, "The Serpent beguiled, or elated me." And he may insinuate that you have proved your strength, and if you could stand at Otaheite, there can be no fear of your falling in England. And whilst he attempts to remove your *fear* of falling, and to inspire you with self-confidence, he may be watching for an opportuity of finding you *within the reach* of the forbidden fruit, with which he designs to tempt you. "Grace be with you;" for perhaps you may be in greater danger in England, under all your advantages, than at Otaheite, where your suspicion, watchfulness and care, were always excited. Believe me, I do not write thus from any thing I saw in you:

but from my own experience, and observation of Satan's devices. No,—I am persuaded, that after all the sacrifices you have offered to God—the anxiety you have suffered—the care you have exercised—the success you have witnessed, and the congratulations poured upon you—the whole of your deportment which I have seen or heard, represents you so sensible of the obligations to the grace of God, the sacrifice of Christ, a special providence, and the spirit of wisdom, as practically and habitually saying, "I am an unprofitable servant." May the influences of the Holy Spirit mingle with all your meditations and reflections, and sanctify the retrospect of past occurrences.

Your's, &c.
J. COOKE.

LETTER XLIII.—TO A YOUNG FRIEND WHO HAD RECENTLY LOST HER MOTHER.

Mourning Christian,

Your thoughts are deeply engaged on the dispensation of God towards your late affectionate *mother* and *yourself*. It was a *mother*, the *only* parent—that *fell*; so *soon* after your father, by a disorder so *rapid* in its progress, so *fatal* and *unexpected* in its termination. Is it a dream? Can it be a reality? Such questions passed my mind when an object very dear to my heart was torn from me. Ah! all was mournful reality, to be contemplated *as in God's presence*, lest the heart should yield to that "sorrow of the world which worketh death." You may, you must mourn; and tears of affection, if you can shed them, will rather relieve than injure you. But whilst you unbosom yourself to a friend, "pour out your soul," in all its sorrows, its sins, its weakness, its fears, and its desires, to Him in whom "the fatherless find mercy." Forget not that you are under one of the most *interesting* as well as painful dispensations, Be chiefly concerned to obtain "grace sufficient for you." This only can *moderate* and sanctify your sorrow; by blending with your painful feelings, *humiliation* and *sorrow* for *sin*, *resignation* of your dearest earthly object, to one, I hope, still dearer to

your heart. Exercise *confidence* in Him, as "the guide of your youth." That grace will render your grief useful, accompany it with *grateful* recollection of *past* mercies, and serious consideration of present ones. It will cherish your *faith* in the word of grace, and embolden your *addresses* to "the throne of grace." This grace can afford you such impressions of divine *love* and *wisdom*, and *faithfulness* in your present trial, as to enable you, with humble submission, to feel "as a child that is weaned from its mother,—yea, even as a weaned child!" To be weaned the second time from a mother is the most painful of the two; but you must confine your thoughts of the mother to this world, and bless God for sparing her so long to lead you so far on the journey of life. Her sufferings were short—and I trust her departure was in peace.

Follow her, then, in your thoughts, to a world of disembodied spirits of just men and women made perfect. Think, indeed, of your departed parents, with anxious desire to follow them, so far as they followed Christ. Think of them, to draw your heart to heaven, to lead you to a life of faith on "the Son of God," and a lively expectation of "the glory to be revealed." God has not made any mistake in the *object* he has taken, the *manner*, nor in the *season* of her departure. The Lord's voice is to be *heard*, and his hand seen and acknowledged, in the distressing event. He speaks to *you*, "BE STILL, and know that I am God!"

May your faith, your patience, your affection, and your gratitude, correspond to such a charge, and induce you to exclaim, "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; my parent's God, and I will exalt thee!" The yoke of affliction, especially that which you now feel, I am sure, is a heavy one; yet I doubt not but that you will soon learn "it is good" and profitable, though painful, "to bear this yoke in your youth." If your trial renders you more familiar with the word of God, more spiritual in your devotion, more dependent on the Redeemer, for pardon and strength, purity and peace, more sensible of the unsubstantial nature of all earthly good, more experimentally alive to the reality, the glory, the efficacy, and the necessity of divine influences,—this "trial of your faith will be found more precious than gold that perisheth." The word of God before you, the providence of God without, and your own present feelings, here conspire to exhort you to "arise and depart," in your hopes and affections, from a world which "is not your rest." These

remaineth a rest for the people of God. Your parents have entered it; it remains still for you and your's, with real sympathy,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XLIV.—TO A STUDENT AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY.

Maidenhead, August, 1812.

My dear Friend,

I REJOICE to hear of your progress in your studies, and the encouragement you receive to excite increasing diligence: may your profiting appear to all. "Go on, approving yourself unto God" and good men, for "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In singleness of aim, and simplicity of dependence, let the great Redeemer be "the first and the last" of all your studies: he claims it, deserves it, and will graciously reward it. Your qualification for the ministry, and your success in it, depend on his presence and blessing; your salvation and comfort are derived from his grace; "the residue of the spirit" is with him, to enlighten and enlarge, to sanctify and elevate your faculties. If his influences be suspended, you live to yourself, and labour in the fire. "If he pour out his Spirit on you," pleasure and advantage will accompany your pursuits: your reward will be with you, and your work before you." Literary pursuits, I am aware, divide your time; you have not a moment to waste: but beware, my dear Guyse, that the enemy of souls does not persuade you to think that time wasted, which is spent in reading "the God-breathed Book," in acts of secret devotion, in instrumentally "healing the broken in heart, and binding up their wounds." The anxious solicitude of awakened and inquiring sinners, the tears and sighs of poverty, the sight of those diseased in body, and distressed in spirit, will give a right direction to your studies, by showing you their subordinate end. And I am sure the advantages of secret devotion, in stimulating and invigorating your mind, will render the labours of the student eminently grateful to your spirit.

You will also "redeem the time," as a hearer of the gospel, whilst at Cambridge. Mr. Simeon is studying and preaching; he is "a burning and shining light." Walk in his light. Remember that your opportunities of hearing the gospel will soon end, by your

call to "preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." Endeavour so to hear, as to know the heart of a hearer, in the various operations of the preached word upon it. "Hear, that your soul may live!" Mark what topics and mode of address reach your spirit, and produce the most interesting effects on it. Pray for your minister in secret, and observe in what manner God meets and speaks to you by his minister in public. The present and future advantages of such conduct will prove incalculable. In a word, let your progress as a christian, take the lead of your progress as a student, "seeking first, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

I have lamented the loss which many young men have sustained in experimental religion, by their mode of prosecuting their academical studies. Endeavouring to shine before men, as scholars; and making this their principal aim, they have chilled the best affections of the soul, "quenched the spirit" in its sanctifying effects, and obscured the lustre of Christian character. Whilst they mortified others by their cold criticisms, they destroyed their usefulness by exciting disgust and pity, in minds from which they expected admiring applause. Such "vain men" render their spirits visible to "the spiritual man, who discerneth all things," while he covets not the conversation or ministry, of one whose "salt has lost its savour." I know you too well to imagine that you will suspect that I would impede your exertions to become a scholar, or diminish your literary ardour. May your intellectual garners be filled with all manner of literary store. The attainment of this will be facilitated by your being filled with revealed truth—"filled with the spirit," in his useful gifts, and saving graces. So obtain both. "Arise, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee."

If you will excuse my almost inexcusable delay in writing, you shall (D. V.) receive an early answer to your particular inquiries relative to M. F. L., with affectionate wishes for your prosperity, in which my family join me,

I am truly, your's,
JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XLV.—TO MR. BRYANT.

(After the Death of Mrs. Cooke.)

Maidenhead, December 31, 1813.

ACCEPT, my dear Sir, the warmest thanks from me and my two daughters, for your very kind present of the two beautiful birds; and also for your affectionate and sympathizing letter. Three times previous to the present affliction, has my heavenly Father "made a breach" in my family, by the loss of two daughters and a son. In each instance "the affliction was grievous," and I found that wounds are sooner made than healed: but I was encouraged to hope "by turning to Him that smote me that his word would not fail of its accomplishment. "I wound and I heal," "I kill and make alive." I have found him to be "Jehovah, God, abundant in truth." But when he said "Son of man, I will, or I do, take away *the desire of thine eyes* with a stroke,"—then, indeed, a sword pierced through my soul;" as a husband and a father. It was a sudden and unexpected stroke; sudden and unexpected as that which the first saint that went to Heaven after the fall, received from his brother; and in both cases a death without pain, without conflict, without suspense or fear. "The survivors died:" she was dismissed in peace.

What I felt, and still feel, is known only to him "who sees in secret"—yet, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth good in His sight." We know not the *strength* of our *affections* until we lose, or are in danger of losing their objects; then we find our present anguish equals or exceeds our past enjoyment. For in this condition of being, whatever affords us pleasure, will, sooner or later, give us pain. Even the enjoyment of God, when *suspended*, leaves "an aching void," known only to such as intermeddle with that joy." Whilst "my heart knows its own bitterness," I perceive wisdom and love in the dispensation. "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are good; and that thou, in very faithfulness, hast afflicted me"! Painfully trying, indeed, I feel them; but I believe, I know, I FEEL, them to be good! This knowledge is "a favour which the Lord gives to his chosen." I must forbear, or out of the abundance of

my heart, I could fill a volume on my own weakness and the power of Christ which has rested upon me.

As to a visit to Farnham, "If the Lord *will*," (an expression enforced by my recent loss!) I will very readily comply with your request.

With Christian affection to you and your's, and your good minister, I am truly and gratefully your's,

J. COOKE.

LETTER XLVI.—TO A DAUGHTER.

London, Jan. 15, 1816.

My dear Sarah,

My correspondence with you on things temporal, whilst I have written on more interesting subjects to others, leaves my own mind unsatisfied in tokens of highest regard to your immortal welfare. He, in whose hands "our times are," has long exercised you with bodily indisposition; and this, from a principle of affectionate sympathy, has been a trial to me, your sister, and the family. For, "if one member suffers, all the members of the family suffer with it." Of the precise nature of your disorder we may be ignorant; but I am fully persuaded, that more depends on diet, clothing, exercise, and a mind in unison with the will of God, than on medicine. *The care of the soul* is "the one thing needful" to young and old, rich and poor, in every condition of life. This is our *duty*, because it is the will of God; it is our *interest*, because it accompanies salvation; it is *rational*, because the soul and eternity outweigh health and temporal life; it is our *privilege*, because it advances our present peace and usefulness, the glory of divine grace in our future happiness; and a contrary conduct would prove our sin and folly, our disgrace and ruin. This care will express itself in serious and frequent *thoughts* on the value of the soul, in studying its necessities, its sins, its temptations, and discouragements; in attention to the *means* of salvation, by reading the best books, especially the word of God, which contains all that is interesting to the soul; by secret prayer for counsel, pardon, purity, peace and strength; by rising to God with the prayers of others, who often express our wants; by the improvement of the affliction of *others*, and especially

our *own*; by observing attentively the Lord's dealings towards those who neglect the "great salvation;" and those who are most favoured in circumstances of peculiar trial. Frequent *application* to the Saviour, in dependence on his wisdom and power, grace and faithfulness, under the encouragement of his invitations and promises, whilst it *evinces* that care, will *strengthen* and *encourage* it, by an increase of grace and consolation; for, "the way of the Lord is strength to the upright;" and, "the joy of the Lord is his strength." The care of the soul, and the blessings which accompanied and followed it, was "that good part," which our Lord assured Martha, for Mary's encouragement, should "never be taken from her." Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to his instructive discourse, with a fixed, improving, and delightful attention. Our Lord received this, as expressive of affection to him, and a regard to her own soul. Martha also loved him, and was "much cumbered," in preparing for his entertainment. But she lost her temper, her peace, and the improving opportunity; directly censured her sister, and indirectly her lord, for not reproving Mary, for a conduct which drew on it his strong commendation. You will find in Dr. Doddridge's volumes of Sermons, one on this text, which I hope you will read with advantage. Care for the soul is wisely directed, when it leads us to commit the soul to the Redeemer's care, which is wise, affectionate, comprehensive, constant, and efficacious; and without which our own care would prove unavailing When our supreme concern is directed to the salvation of the soul, we are prepared for every event. "Seeking in the *first* place, the kingdom of God; all needful blessings for the body and life will be added."—Matt. vi., 32. We then possess an evident interest in the divine favour, and may interpret every event as expressive of it. It will strengthen our confidence in God, spiritualize the mind in duties, fortify it under trials, shield it in temptation, render it decided in circumstances where it would otherwise be doubtful, preserve consistency in conduct, sweeten our temporal blessings, and render our prospects clear, encouraging, and animating.

You will receive this as a demonstration of my care for your best interests, which will be followed by the fervent and incessant prayers of your very affectionate friend and father,

J. COOKE.

My love to Mary and Betsy.

Letter XLVII.—To a Daughter in Affliction.

My dear Girl,

Under your affliction, the word and Spirit of God are all-sufficient for the support of your mind. In proportion to your *faith* in the word of God, will be your relief and comfort. That faith is our *duty;* for he that believeth not God, calumniates him as a *liar*. Yet faith is the gift of divine *grace*, and the effect of divine power. Of this God convinces his people, in all their efforts to believe under convictions of sin, strong temptations to distrust him, difficult duties to perform, and manifold trials to endure. Now they *endeavour* to believe, and cannot. They thought it easy without trials, which obliged them to attempt it. They are surprised and discouraged at their sensible inability to exercise faith in the mercy, power, and truth of God to them. Here begins *self-knowledge*, humility, self-despair, and self-renunciation. What they were before taught by the *word* of God, they now learn by *experience*,—"without me ye can do nothing!" We are not sufficient, of ourselves, to think a good thought. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. What is the *design* of this experience? To produce self-distrust, and self-denial. The heart untried had promised much; we *trusted* its promise, we now perceive the *folly* of it,—"he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." The heart promises most *in affliction*,—if I am restored! When restored, my heart has always deceived me. What can we do? Confess and lament our weakness *to God; implore* strength, *try* to believe, use the encouragements God has given in his word. Where will this end? "Our sufficiency is of God. I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me. When I am weak, *then* am I strong. The Lord is my righteousness and strength."

My strength is made perfect; that is, my perfect strength is made manifest *in weakness!* Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities—that is, weaknesses, that *the power of Christ* may rest upon me. These are two very important lessons,—to learn *our weakness*, and *God's sufficiency*. This is gradual, by repeated trials and encouragements. Ever after this, we shall ascribe all our strength to God. "The Lord will give strength to his people." This he does

by means and instruments. " Strengthen ye," ministers, " the weak hands; say to them of a fearful heart, be strong."

May you, my dear girl, " be strengthened with all might, according to *his glorious power*, unto all patience and long-suffering, *with joyfulness*." This will honour the wisdom and grace of God in your affliction, excite your own admiration and gratitude, and refresh the souls of your friends. You will see the end of the Lord, and adore. " Whoso is wise, and he will observe these things, and understand the *loving-kindness* of the Lord," in dispensations which confound sense and reason: for,

" Where reason fails,
With all her powers;
There *faith prevails*,
And love adores?"

When you weep, I weep; my heart flutters with your's. When you rejoice, I rejoice; my heart vibrates with your's. We have shared in bereavements and mercies, and I doubt not but we shall yet " obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need." Welcome " God's thoughts" in his word: they will instruct, sanctify, and console your mind; and, by " calming the surges of the soul," will prove medicinal to the body, for " a cheerful heart does good, like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones,"—that is, debilitates the bodily frame.

I am afraid I write more than you can read, at least with profitable attention. The letters are " the flow of soul," the result of forty years' study, reading, prayer, observation, and experience, although to me the thoughts of the moment. If I knew your inmost mind, I could speak to it " a word in season." As it is, my duty and affection are " ready to every *good word* and work" for you. This hath been successful to very many in the hour of affliction. Can you read my letters? Do you understand them? Are they adapted? They are not the result of present study, but of spontaneous sympathy. When you can write, or Jane for you, I shall better know. I was quite deaf this morning, with nervous anxiety, but Mr. Shepherd's letter cured it. " Heaviness in the heart of man, maketh it stoop" under its burden, " but a good word maketh it glad."

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XLVIII.—To his DAUGHTER SARAH, IN AFFLICTION.

My dear Sarah, London, 17th July, 1816.

I AM deeply concerned for your health, and more so, for a blessing to accompany your indisposition: yet I would avoid guilt, by suggesting, what appears to me the best means, and I wish you to avoid the guilt and consequences of neglecting them. So far as you are able to bear horse exercise, *gentle*, *regular*, *constant*, I believe you will find relief. I may be mistaken; but I think so. The mind *at rest*, however, is the first in importance, towards health. God's favour is our chief good:—Faith in the Mediator, is the way to enjoy it. John xiv. 6, Eph. ii. 18. God's mercy and Christ's sufferings, are unlimited in their *sufficiency* to pardon, and bless us. And when we obtain "a good hope through grace," of pardon, acceptance, and eternal life, we can resign our earthly interests to the *providence* of God. At the first attempt, we may feel the painful conflict; but gradually, though slowly, the subdued mind "yields itself unto God," for health or sickness,—life or death.

Wisdom, makes *a right use* of *knowledge*. And if we were, indeed, wise, we should have no choice, in temporal things; but refer them to "the only wise God," who only knows what is really and eternally good for us. The majority of our family are gone to the other, and I doubt not, to the *better*, world. The thought of following them is affecting to nature, which is attached to present life. But when the mind is alive to its best interests, it thinks with resignation, possibly with pleasure, and sometimes with joy, on the social happiness of that world, where there is no more sickness, tears, pain, death, or even temporary separation. The interval between one separation will be a moment; and it is, in reality, of small importance which goes first; because that is regulated by one who cannot err. Heaven is our true, long, everlasting home, if our hearts are right. Phil. i. 21, 33. John xvii. 24. Heb. xii. 22, 24.

The heart and nerves will often fail, as dear Mrs. Aldridge said; but looking to Jesus, whose "Grace is sufficient for us" we shall be "strengthened with might by his spirit, in the inner man." Your times and mine are in God's hands; and faith in this truth, will sweeten life, trials, and death itself. You will find Bennett's

"Christian Oratory," a large octavo, near the last shelves, on the right hand in my study. Read it, digest it; and you will find it peculiarly suitable. Sibbs "On the Soul's Conflict," and Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," I think are near it. Be not discouraged by the changes in your frame. The present dispensation may prove the greatest blessing you ever possessed. God can restore you; and if he should, he may *first* pass the sentence of death on all means. Your happiness, however, will depend much on your reconciliation to the will of God. A frame of mind, which says "thy will be done," is faith, repentance, patience, and all the fruits of the spirit, in substance. Let your chief concern be, peace of mind. You will then pity others, more rationally than they can pity you. Read the pure word of God, look to the Saviour it reveals, and trust soul and body with him. Pray much for faith, patience, resignation, and peace of mind. Let no discouragement hinder prayer: and you will soon find answers to prayer, will produce peace, strength, and fortitude. God will be your "glory, and the lifter up of your head!"

Your reading, praying, reflection, and trials, will occasion new discoveries of your heart, your sins, and your weakness. This is common to the best; and if we think it singular, it is an error in judgment. These humbling views of ourselves, make us ready to receive the Saviour; and to enter, in spirit, into Mr. Hart's delightful hymn, "Come ye Sinners,"—read it, as containing the experience of a sinner, coming to Christ, *as a sinner*. The more vile you see yourself, the better, if the discovery leads you to Christ, to the promises, and to the sovereign, free, infinite mercy of God, God's remedy is even then, not according to *our* views of ourselves, but his own. He only knows the worst of our condition, and his remedy is proportioned to *his* knowledge of our condition. Faith in this truth, "gives glory to God," in his promises. Mark the portions of God's word, which encourage you. And if you write your feelings in a book, you will become better acquainted with yourself, and derive much advantage from it, in every review of yourself.

Perhaps you can write your heart to me, better than speak it; and I can write more freely to you. Be assured, that my affectionate anxiety excites my constant and earnest prayers for your body and soul. For you, "I pour out my soul in me," and "travail in birth that Christ may be formed in you." You are not ignorant of the

gospel; and I trust its power will relieve, console and strengthen your spirit. Mr. Romaine used to say,—"a nervous frame is Satan's seat." And I am sure from experience, it affords the enemy much advantage. Mr. Wesley says—"a nervous frame is the hand of God, impressing us with conviction of the insufficiency of all created good to make us happy." If God uses various methods to lead us into "the way," to pardon, peace, holiness, and heaven. John xiv. 6, we have reason to sing,

Hosanna to our sov'reign Lord,
Who saves by different ways;
These mercies lay a sov'reign claim
To our deserved praise. *Watts.*

Messrs. Wilks and Hyatt being from home, I have engaged to take Mr. Hyatt's turn on Thursday, at Tottenham. The weather has been so incessantly wet, that I have not been able to call on any one at the west-end of the town.

You will give my love to the Mountaineers, and to Mr. W.'s family, to Betsy and John. Let me know how you are as to side, cough, expectoration, &c. I must conclude this for Mr. Edwards. with much affection.

I am, Your's,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER XLIX.—TO THE SAME.

My dear Sarah, Maidenhead, March 10, 1818.

YOUR letter very much surprised and grieved me. I had no conception of your illness. Mr. S. mentioned the physician; but this proved nothing, in the flattering point of view in which he places your disorder. To say no more on this subject, at present, I am glad to learn from your own hand, so favourable an account. The air of London being more relaxing than that of the country, retarded your recovery.

Our journeys and our visits are of a mixed nature, like every condition and enjoyment in this world; and experience and observation will regulate our expectations, and prevent our disappointment and mortification. At least, this will in a good degree prove the case, if our trials are not lost upon us. And if we could wit-

ness the trials and death of *others*, with self-application, it might render many *personal* afflictions unnecessary. But alas! relative, personal, and social sufferings, are all inefficient. "We suffer these things in vain," unless the dispensation be accompanied by a "small, still voice!"

Our diseases may alarm us; and our hearts promise to take the alarm, and never to be surprised a second time by a threatening disease. The concern of the soul may subside, with the disease of the body, and the "deceitful heart" forget "the wormwood and the gall." Or we may glide through a trying dispensation without alarm and without benefit. We were ill—we recovered—we forgot both, in the common duties, amusements, or trifles of the day. But if "the Lord afflicts for our profit," we shall not only *feel* the *stroke*, but hear the *voice* of the Lord. That "small, still voice," will be heard—will direct us to such points of our character, such references to past life, such views of our present state and frame,—such resources in the word of Grace, and such realizing contemplation of invisible, future, and eternal beings and things, as to render it good for us to have been afflicted. We shall often recal the perceptions, the anxieties, the apprehensions of those moments, when "we had the sentence of death in ourselves."

Affliction must be a great good or a great evil—there is no medium. It does not alter the nature of things; but often leads us to see them as they are. This is a great attainment. Until this be accomplished, the mind trifles with things natural, civil, and sacred.

When, however, we learn what deep and interesting lessons God can impart in a short time by a moderate trial; and how many lessons are lost on us, in other seasons of affliction, it should teach us to distrust ourselves—to cherish simplicity of dependence on divine sufficiency, and to *implore* what we can obtain from no one, but the "God of all grace." To his mercy and gracious influence I commend you, which is all-sufficient; and without which we derive no more real benefits from our trials, than from the alarm at the unexpected firing of a gun.

Mr. E. is better. Mrs. E. very well—both, with Mr. and Mrs. Searle, desire me to remember them to you. Betsy is better—not been out yet.

Your visits to Mr. S.'s have been marked by one death in the former instance, and by two in the present. But it is *personal* suffering, and

shouldst go." We readily allow that affliction is beneficial to many persons; but God teaches one to say, "it is *good*—good for me that *I* have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." All think health and prosperity good, even when they become a snare: but God teaches a man, in many instances to say, "before I was afflicted I went *astray*; but *now* have I learned thy word." So true does *experience* prove, that "none teacheth like HIM!" Psalm xciv. 12. The prophet Isaiah said, "the Lord spake unto me, and instructed me with a *strong hand*." Others teach us by the *mouth* only; but God teacheth with *power*. God helps the soul, as your nurse and doctor do the body, by *assisting* and *supporting* it. "I was brought *low*, and he helped me." "In the day when I cried, he answered and helped me; and strengthened me with *strength in my soul*." The believer speaks out, "I will love thee, O Lord, MY STRENGTH!"

God teaches *inwardly*, *powerfully*, *effectually*. He "shines into the *heart*." Not *all at once*; but as the sun breaks on us *gradually*. "His going forth is prepared as the *morning*." The day *dawns*, the sun *riseth*; and shineth more and more unto the PERFECT DAY."

The rising sun shows us many *disagreeable* and *pleasant* objects; and the light of truth and grace, discovers the evil of *sin*, the sinfulness of the *heart*, the redemption of Christ, the mercy of God, and the wisdom and kindness of Providence. It displays the patience, and long suffering, and goodness of God.

It reveals past mercies and past sins; and leads to grateful acknowledgments. "Thou hast not dealt with us *after our sins*; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, Psalm ciii.

Pray for divine teaching, and divine support. It is kind in a parent to send a child to *school*. Affliction is *God's school*. Many children will not learn under the *indulgence of home*.

"I spake unto thee in thy *prosperity*; and thou wouldst not *hear!*" But in the school of affliction, "he *openeth* the ear to *discipline*; and commandeth that we turn from iniquity." Then a soul exclaims, "what I know not, TEACH thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will (depending on divine grace) do it no more."

God has laid your soul's interest on my heart: and I hope you will receive these proofs of it, with a feeling sense of your obligation, not to *me*; but to GOD!

The family are all in bed, and I should be there too, if I could forget you.

Read the 103d Psalm, until you feel the *Spirit* of it, with your affectionate friend,

JOHN COOKE.

P.S.—Say not "*to-morrow*;" but with Augustine "why not *to day* Lord! *Why not to day? This—this* is, "the day of salvation!" The dying penitent on the cross, had but *one* day; it was his *last* day—but oh! amazing grace! That one day was the day of his salvation!

In that day, the Spirit of Christ opened the eyes of his *understanding*. He felt himself a condemned sinner. He trusted the atonement and grace of the Redeemer. He prayed, "Lord! remember ME, when thou comest to thy kingdom." And what was the *answer*?—"*This day, shalt thou be with* ME, IN PARADISE!"

Grace! grace! make it your *desire*, your *prayer*, your *trust*, your joy!

LETTER LII.—To Mr. EDWARDS.

Dear Sir, London, July 18, 1824.

THERE are many inquiries after you by your old passengers; and all are full of expressions of sympathy and good-will. Their concern *generally* ends in naming some *physician;* as if when God sends a disease, his only design were, that we should get well again. Few in affliction feel the *impression* of a divine hand; and fewer still feel an *abiding* impression of GOD and his TRUTH. Their feelings are soon produced, and they soon vanish; like the letters the boys make on the sand on the sea shore, which the first wave destroys.

Such are all teachings and impressions but divine. Without this, a man is delivered from a succession of afflictions, and *forgets* the "wormwood and the gall." Others without the grace of God in their affliction, forget all *past mercies*, as if they never had a good day and night: "*I forget prosperity!*" I have been sent to the

"house of correction" many times, to learn the value of past and present mercies, as well as the evil of past and present sins. And truly I found as the Scriptures speak, that "no chastening for the *present* is joyous, but *grievous*" in itself; but *afterwards* it yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Human parents often chasten from *passion*, but God for our PROFIT, that we may be partakers of his HOLINESS.—Heb. xii.

Holiness, in God's estimation, is *profit*, *gain*, *wealth*. *Holiness* is "the riches of his glory," or "glorious riches," which a Christian carries with him into eternity!

Now, my dear Sir, if *this* is *God's end*, how far *below* his aim, and even *contrary* to it, is a mere desire to be *well*. "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" And if our end in affliction is only HEALTH, and God's end is our *purification*—*the health of the soul*—is it not probable, that God will cross our aim, as we slight his design?

God says, "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Our prayer should be an *echo* to this exhortation—"turn thou me and I shall be turned."

To-morrow is the Sabbath; but you are confined to *your* house, while others go to *God's* house. Pray for the spirit of the day. The Apostle John was a prisoner in the Isle of Patmos; but God was not confined; he visited his servant, who said, "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day.*" You have "the *word of grace*," and "the *throne* of grace;" may God pour upon you and Mrs. Edwards "*the Spirit* of grace!" And also on your's,

With much sympathy,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LIII.—TO MR. EDWARDS.

My dear Sir, London, 21st July, 1824.

AND if a man be *blessed*, "whom the Lord chasteneth and teacheth;" what are the *lessons* he teaches?

First, our *dependence*: You are now, in your body, dependent on Mrs. Edwards. You cannot help yourself: and for the well-being

of your *soul*, you can trust none but God: and indeed for every degree of *bodily relief*.

A *second* lesson, is *sympathy*, a fellow-feeling for *other* sufferers; and for those who suffer in anxiety, self-denial and labor, in *attending* on you.

A *third* lesson is *gratitude*:—To GOD and Man for *past* mercies, *present* mercies and *promised* mercies, to those who seek God.

A *fourth* lesson, is *patience*; impatience has *pride* for its root; patience renders our burden lighter, and fills our friends with patience towards us. But *patience* springs from *humility*; on a humble sense of our *sins*, our *deserts*, and our *unworthiness*. Humility says "Thou hast not dealt with me after my *sins*." A humble mind *feels* its *obligations* to God, and to those who attend on it.

A *fifth* lesson, is *prayer*. "Is any afflicted? let him pray." Jam. v. 13. "I," said David in affliction, "give myself unto prayer." "Call on *me* in the day of trouble." Ps. 50. Jesus, "being in an *agony*, *prayed* the more earnestly!"

A *sixth* lesson, taught by sanctified affliction, is, the love of *God's word*. "This is my *comfort*, in my affliction: thy word hath quickened me." In reading a part of the 119th Psalm to Miss Westbrook, who died, she said, "stop, sir, I never said so much to you before—I never could: but now I *can* say, "The word of thy mouth, is dearer to me, than THOUSANDS of gold and silver." What can gold and silver do for me NOW?"

Another lesson is, the value of the *grace*, or *favour* of God! As to the *world*, grace *weans* us from it, by setting before us a *better* world. God, whose title is, "The God of all comfort," and the God that comforteth them that are *cast down*, answers to his character, by sending *another* comforter, the Holy Spirit, who is called, by eminence, in distinction from all others, "THE COMFORTER."

God often passes a sentence of death on *all means*, before he relieves us. Hence David, "I looked on my right and left hand, and *refuge failed me!*" Then he cried, "My soul, wait thou only upon God: for he *only* is my rock, and my salvation!" And in 27th Psalm, "I had *fainted*, unless I had BELIEVED, to see the goodness of God, in the land of the living." *Faith*, in God's word, was his relief. Mrs. Edwards will excuse my not writing to her, as I am sure her principal concern is for your best interest. Nothing but your salvation will relieve her mind; and any signs of "the things which

accompany salvation," in your soul, will render all her toil and suffering, light. The Lord opened the *heart* of Lydia; "and then her *mouth* was opened." Pray, "Lord open thou my heart, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." In this prayer, you are joined by your faithful friend,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LIV.—TO MR. EDWARDS.

London, July 15, 1816.

My dear Friend,

I WRITE to fulfil my promise, and to comply with your desire. The weather has been wet, night and day, since I came, and must be very distressing to the farmers. If I make this remark to the Londoners, they exclaim, "surely!" and instantly complain of the dullness of trade. The town and country has its peculiar trials; both have the art of increasing them; whilst few, very few, think how well God has governed the world from its creation, how much more numerous our sins than our trials, and that if our trials themselves do not prove some of our greatest blessings, it is our own fault. I do not mean that we are able to bear or improve them, but "our sufficiency is of God," to whom we should apply. The divine conduct oft corresponds to our own. Many of us have been complaining that corn was too cheap: the destruction of the first crop of hay will raise the price of it. The farmers in general see God's *works* without gratitude for their increase; and if the crop fail, the weather unfavourable, they complain rather than pray. And many of them "curse God in their hearts;" as their murmurs and general conversation prove. After all, the Lord has provided us the old hay; he may provide a large second growth, and make the farmer gain more in his corn, by these rains, than he will lose in his hay! We profess to believe, that "the Son of Man *will* come in *the clouds* of Heaven," to *judge* the world; but do not see him *now* in the clouds of heaven, *governing* the world in judgment and mercy! "The Lord reigneth," in nature, providence, grace, and glory.

These remarks are applicable to us in every condition of life. We profess to believe that God is wise and good, just and faithful,

in *all* his operations; and yet, we secretly repine, or openly murmur, as if we had discqvered a defect in the divine plan. Facts prove, that man may be happy or miserable, in any outward circumstances. Some are rich, healthy, and *unhappy*: others are poor, or sick, and yet *happy* in the favour of God. It is not the outward *condition*; but the *disposition* of the mind, on which, under God, our peace depends. You sustained a loss of five or six hundred pounds, in one winter, by the death of your horses:—through the folly of an uncle, I lost between two and three thousands a year; but it becomes us to acknowledge GOD in this dispensation, and to believe, that our loss is our gain. Humanly speaking, had I possessed all earthly good, to which I was entitled, I had never heard the gospel! "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Observation teaches us, that unsanctified prosperity is a curse; by cherishing proud independence, self-will, covetousness, evil passions, and neglect of God: and that sanctified trials prove blessings, by weaning us from the world, and leading us to seek our happiness in the substantial blessings of the gospel. Were we as wise for eternal life, as worldly men are for temporal things; and as diligent in the means of obtaining the one, as they are for the other, our souls would prosper, we should enjoy God, ourselves, and our temporal blessings. Then, if the fields should yield no grass or corn, the cattle should fail, trade become dull, and all worldly prospects clouded, we should "rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the God of our salvation." Faith in the grace and promises of God in Christ, and prayer for the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, is "the secret of the Lord," made known to "those that fear him.

Wishing myself, and you, and your's, that happiness,

I remain,

Your faithful and affectionate Friend,

JOHN COOKE.

Letter LV.—To a Minister.

(On the Condemnation of Sinners.)

My dear Brother, Maidenhead, Sept. 1819.

In one part of our last conversation, you appeared to me to think, that there was no condemnation against sinners, but for the breach of the *moral law*. I said, that "making light of Christ," neglecting the great salvation, unbelief, self-righteous pride, prevailing love of sin under the *gospel*, exposed the sinner to *greater* misery. Surely nothing but a partial, rigid system, could oppose this truth.

You allow the sinner is condemned for transgressing the moral law, but not that he is condemned to *greater* misery, if he rejects the gospel. Why? Because he *will* not, and *cannot* believe the gospel. But if this inability be not *criminal*, his inability to keep the law is not so, for he *cannot* love God and man. Why? Not because he cannot *love*, but because he cannot love a *holy God*; nor *his will*, his heart being *enmity itself* against his will. You allow the latter to be criminal, and is not *enmity* to the *gospel* criminal? Why does not the sinner receive it? Because the doctrines of grace are too humbling for his *pride*, and the injunctions of the gospel too *pure* for his *inclinations*. Are not pride and the love of sin criminal? And does not sin expose to fewer or more stripes, according to its aggravations?

I know of no sin against the *moral law* which is *unpardonable*; but there is such a thing as sinning against the *grace and confirmed truth of the gospel*, for which there is no forgiveness, Matt. xii. 31, 32. There is no sin against the moral law, which my brother may commit, but I am allowed to pray for the *forgiveness of it*; but there is a sin against the *revealed remedy*, for the forgiveness of which *I am forbidden to pray*, 1 John, v. 16. There is no kind of sin against the moral law, which the blood of Christ will not expiate, but there is a sin against the *gospel*, which the blood of Christ was not shed to expiate, Heb. x. 26. There is no sin against the moral law which has not been *repented* of, but there is a sin against the gospel never repented of; Heb. vi. 6. If a man hears the gospel, attended by conviction, profession, and external privileges, and

"turns the *grace* of God into lasciviousness," is not this a crime against the gospel, for which he is exposed to *greater* punishment, than those will suffer, who are only under the guilt of violating the moral law? See Jude.

Inability to keep the law and receive the gospel, is proportionable to the *degree* of our *criminality*, and the measure of our guilt. The pillow of inability, is the rest of unconverted sinners *under the gospel*. It is the secret and constant *plea* for themselves,—"I pray thee have me excused," for I am unable to keep the law, or believe the gospel. Those who hear the gospel, and prefer the reign of sin to the reign of grace in their salvation, are charged with the crime, and punished for it, Luke xix. 27.

The odour of rich aromatics revives some; they are life unto life. Such is the gospel believed. But if unbelief, self-righteousness, and the love of sin, reign, finally, under the gospel, there is not only for the sinner death by the *law*, but "death unto death." The sinner is dead *in* sin, and dead by sin,—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." A remedy is provided and proclaimed to him; and if he TRAMPLES under foot the "BLOOD OF THE SON OF GOD," does he not increase his crimes, and augment his misery? Or does his love of sin, which is his inability, excuse him for sinning against the proclaimed grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the Spirit of Grace?

You remarked, there was not any *occasion* for the condemnation of a sinner, beyond the moral law. But surely the moral law is not the *only* book to be opened at the judgment seat. Those who have lived under the gospel, will be judged by it. "THE WORD THAT I HAVE SPOKEN, *the same* shall judge him in the last day," John, xii. 47. On whom will vengeance fall? On them that *obey not the gospel* of Christ, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. If disobedience to the law of Moses was punished with a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we NEGLECT THE GREAT SALVATION?

On *other* subjects, you call Christ the sole *Legislator* under the Christian dispensation. And can he be "the Lord, the King of Zion," without law? And has that law no sanctions? Or is disobedience to the *authority and will of Christ*, in the gospel, no sin? Is the command to all men, every where to *repent*, a command of the law? No, of the *gospel!* What is the sanction of this command? What its motives? Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at

hand. "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." What is the command of Christ, under the gospel, to sinners? Repent ye, and believe the gospel. The sinners in Sodom, under the law, were condemned; but it shall be more tolerable for the sinners in Sodom, in the day of judgment, who did not repent, than for sinners under the gospel. Why? because they were under the law? No; because they were under the gospel, and "because they repented not!" To break the law, is to sin against the authority, the holiness, justice, and power of God. But sin under the gospel is also against the mercy, grace, and love of God,—against the blood of Christ, and the Spirit of Grace. The law admitted an atonement; the gospel reveals it. But that atonement trampled on, there remains no other sacrifice for sin. What is the threatening against this sin under the gospel? A much sorer punishment.

The inability of the covetous, the dishonest, the malignant, the fornicator, the single and double adulterer, and the self-righteous, is proportionable to his love of sin. If they believe not, "they have no cloke for their sin."

And shall ministers of Christ find them a cloke, in their *criminal inability?* If they repent not, they shall perish. If they believe not, they shall be damned. If they love not Christ, they shall be accursed.

And if any preacher shall assure them, that impenitence, unbelief, and want of love to Christ, will be excused by their inability, and that they will be condemned for breaking the law only, let that minister be prepared to answer it, at the judgment seat of Christ, before the great white throne. When, as St. Paul declares, "God shall judge the secrets of men, according to *my gospel.*"

Is it no additional crime in a transgressor of the *law*, that he afterwards slights the proclamation of MERCY? If guilty, he may and often does, justify himself, extenuate his crimes, complain of the strictness of the law and the severity of justice. Is not his proud contempt of offered mercy a crime? But perhaps he cannot repent and confess his sins. Is his impenitency an excuse?

If I appeal to experience, there is not a member of the church, who has not been more deeply affected, with his sin against CHRIST, the GRACE of God—the SPIRIT of grace, than against the moral law; because he knew the reason, or cause of his not receiving Christ, was his love of sin! He did not so much fear

damnation for breaking the moral law, as for *not believing* in "*Christ*, who is the end of the law, to every one that believeth."

Hence the fears of thousands, not that they shall perish, because they have broken the law; but that they have committed the unpardonable sin, which is a sin against the gospel!

I have seen persons sensible of condemnation by the law, instantly relieved, by opening the gospel to them; but souls who have felt the guilt of slighting the LOVE—the BLOOD—the GRACE of a Saviour, have sweat all but drops of blood, under the guilt of neglecting, slighting, abusing redeeming mercy.

What was the sin which overwhelmed the soul of "the chief of sinners?" Sin, not merely against the moral law, (that came afterwards) but I was a persecutor of Jesus—a blasphemer of Jesus—injurious, to Jesus—his cause and his saints!—sin against the gospel!

To break the law without repentance, is to "die,—without mercy;" as you observed, the law speaks not a syllable of mercy. This is a *sore* punishment, to "die without mercy," for breaking the law: but of how much sorer punishment, shall he be thought *worthy* (appealing to your reason and conscience), who has trampled under foot, the blood of the Son of God?

Is this not a crime, in *addition* to breaking the moral law? And has "the law of grace," no sanctions? If your hearers live after the flesh, they shall die," though hearers of the gospel. May you be "pure from their blood!"

Pardon the freedom of your affectionate brother,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LVI.—TO A YOUNG MAN DESIRING THE MISSIONARY WORK.

Maidenhead, May 29, 1821.

My dear Sir,

I SHALL be ready to receive any communications on the subject of your letter, any time after to-morrow, and shall leave the season to your own choice. If you would write the occasion, progress, and present motives of your desire to become a Missionary; what

labours, difficulties, and sacrifices you anticipate;—mention what decision of judgment, and purpose you have felt: and the strength and constancy of your views and desires. How often have you looked to your native country, your parents' house, your present connexion with the church, and the useful station you occupy! What have you felt on realizing a last farewell in this world to all your present relations, friends, or privileges? Do you halt between them, and a desire to depart to the heathen? Are you ready to resign yourself to the Missionary Society, to be sent far hence to the heathen? Is it the result of a desire to obtain some advantages, to make an experiment, or does your desire arise from a sense of duty? Do you think, in the sight of God, that you ought to go, and shall sin against God if you do not? Are you prepared to assure the Directors, that you think there is no serious objection from any thing in your constitution. Change of climate "casts down strong men," much more the weak. I greatly esteem and love you; though it is not always necessary to tell a person so, as almost all friends do in every letter. But were your usefulness a hundred degrees more than it is among us, I could not, dare not, advise you not to go for a Missionary. In such a case, the Missionary Society, the Christian world, my own conscience, the heathen themselves would rise up in judgment against me. Not to mention that I should deem it a great honour to the church, and to myself, for our members to become Missionaries, as evincing the energy of divine principles under my ministry. If you have heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send?" Who will go for us? Spring forward—if you dare, if you ought, if you must;—and say, "Here am I, send ME!" You and the Missionary Society must determine; but in faithfulness and affection, I must propose *my doubts*, whether your constitution warrants you to offer yourself; for I should be sorry to waste the time, the labour and property of the Society, and disappoint their hopes. It is even possible, that a change of climate may invigorate your frame.

However, I will not draw down on my head the guilt of violating my own principles, and counteracting my own prayer, "Thy kingdom come." If, after mature reflection, you wish for an introduction to the Directors, of whom I am one, your desire shall be answered by

Your Friend and Pastor,

JOHN COKE.

LETTER LVII.—TO A FRIEND AT MAIDENHEAD.

London, November 9, 1822.

My dear Friend,

I HAVE been thinking, since the candles were placed on the table, this evening,—What is the *secret*, by which any fallen creature can be *happy* in his *situation*, his *temporal* blessings and his *trials*? My dear little John had anticipated my leaving him, and repeated it all the week, and kissed me ten times a day, with "I am sorry you are going." He kissed me with tears when I left him, and said, "I wish I were going with you: God bless you, you dear man." God provides a remedy for this in a child, who is soon *diverted* and *pleased* with anticipation of renewing the interview. At the coach at Maidenhead, and in London, the same scenes were witnessed in the parting of relations and friends. Many tears and last words followed each other, until the coach drove off.

Hope, "the balm of life," relieved them, as it does Christian friends, when one sails from the mortal shores. Then Hope is also the balm of death. They sorrow indeed, but "not as men without HOPE" of enjoying each other's society, in a world where there is "no more death, nor *tears*, nor *separation*. The righteous hath hope in his death," for *himself*, and his believing *friends*. And even in *life*, we are relieved, by dwelling in the secret place of the most high; and abiding under the shadow of the All-sufficient." —Ps. xci., I. This is the true secret of peace to return to, and meet in God, as our *home*," our dwelling place for *safety* and *rest*.

Worldly men know the dwelling place of each other, as "*men* of the world;" but they know not the refuge, the rest, and residence of *Christians*, *as* Christians. This is a *secret:* it is where they never enter "within the vale!" It is the gracious and supporting presence of God! Mr. Patterson, the missionary, said, in the Town Hall, at dinner, that, with the presence of God, he was as much at home in Russia, as in England, or his native country, Scotland. Too often, alas! the Christian wanders from his home, but he finds *no other*. He flies off, and like the dove of Noah, finding all around nothing but *sea*, returns to the *Ark*, and is kindly received again. Past "experience" of this kindness "worketh hope;" and

when he has chided his soul, he says, "Return to thy rest—O, my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee"—*however unworthy*. "A good hope is obtained through GRACE!" And what is grace? A delight in God to dispense mercy and favour to the *undeserving* and *ill*-deserving, who seek it as "the one thing needful." This induced David's resolution,—"I will *say* of the Lord, he is my refuge," whatever others do or say.

"Other refuge, have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me."

Never did I speak to congregations larger, or more attentive, than this day. Full—the two largest places in London. Oh! how little did I seem to myself!—I was overwhelmed by the tears and words of joy, at hearing me after my bereavements. In body and mind I was borne above myself, and the hearers were carried with me. I was amazed, confounded. I am sure you will not let these lines be seen. I shall be accused of vanity, where I appear to myself,—"less than nothing"—at best,—"less than the least of all saints." I am anxious to hear from home. Warn Jane against fire; for John Brown will sleep over his candle. Tell John, good copies will not be lost on me.

My love to little John and friends, especially the Westbrooks—as *my dear Mary* used to say of her FATHER,—"*I do love them much*, very much." Your's, &c.

J. COOKE.

LETTER LVIII.—TO THE REV. J. H. HINTON, OF READING.

(On a Controversy between a Socinian and a Trinitarian.)

My dear Brother, Maidenhead, Nov. 26, 1824.

I AM greatly obliged by the loan of the N——— controversy, in which it appears to me, that the combatants are very unequal; and although Mr. S.'s quotations are often a fair and full answer to *particular parts* of Mr. K.'s work, he has not met him *fairly* and

fully. Mr. K. does not clearly state his views of the person of Christ, at least not fully; but he allows him to be a creature, the first and noblest creature; and honoured as *a subordinate God*. An answer to him in kind must be given by an ingenious Hebrew scholar.

Supposing, not granting, him to be right in his views of revealed truth; no books I ever read are so much calculated to mislead the understanding on subjects of infinite moment as the *Sacred Scriptures* in the present translation. His *hearers* will be confirmed in his sentiments, and *others* shaken by his superiority to his antagonist. If the loan had been a gift, I should have sent it to * * * with an urgent request. But you are forty miles nearer to the gate of the enemy. If you possess a sling and a stone which can reach his forehead, go forth and meet him. If you decline the contest, send the works to some David, who is able and willing to answer him, and say, "is there not a cause?" It is easy to assert and to rail, but an answer must come from a man who is a Hebrew scholar —a cool and an acute reasoner. For myself, I can no more understand how God can communicate divine attributes to a creature, than I can perceive how the most exalted creature can create and govern, and save and judge the world. I can *believe* that I possess a body, soul, and spirit; that the Godhead is revealed in three distinct persons (I have no other word), but I cannot comprehend *myself* or my *Creator*. "The least circle cannot contain the greatest." I cannot read my Bible as I have done, day and night for forty years, and rest with cold indifference on the frozen, though critical speculations on the revelation of God to man; nor can I explain how three are one in the Godhead; but I can say, that in the *belief* of what I deem the truth of my Bible, that in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit," to whom the same attributes and works are individually ascribed,—I do feel my mind enlightened and sanctified, elevated and expanded, centred and satisfied. This truth I have proved under trials various and numerous; and "experience worketh hope." This truth has borne me up, bears me on, and I doubt not will bear me through "things to come!" I am no scholar—no critic; but I have "learned of the Father to come to the Son; and by one Spirit to come to the Father by him." The word of truth and grace directs me to Jesus Christ, as my hope, my

refuge, set before me." I feel a spirit of grace and power conducting me to it. I read the oath, which assures me, by the life and character of God, that I am safe. In the belief of this I feel strong, prevailing consolation.

If an Arian, or Socinian; or an angel preach to me another Jesus, (a creature) another Gospel, I must leave him to the curse denounced, if I cannot convince him; but let him leave me to "hold fast instruction, the form of sound words," and to "keep them, for they are my life!" On my first call to the Christian ministry, my mind was tortured by a succession of temptations to Atheism, Deism, Arianism, Socinianism, Quakerism, and Antinomianism. I had hearers of each class, who presented me with their respective favourite authors. I trembled, and read, and prayed at the thoughts of *reading* them; but my opinion being requested, although I could not recommend my *hearers* to read them, I felt it my duty to study the nature, composition, and tendency of theological and moral poisons. With fear and trembling I read as they were brought to me, Priestley, Price, Lindsay, Riley, and Barclay. I allowed myself vegetables by day, and four hours rest at night.

To say that my mind was not shaken by the volumes I read, is saying little. I was much confirmed and established, in what *I* then deemed and still believe—"The truth"—the truth, as it is in Jesus. I read with avidity Dr. Gill and Dr. Owen on the Trinity. Their defences perplexed and confounded me. I could not receive edification from their account of eternal generation. The communication of the life of one person in the Godhead to a second and third, left the thought of derivation and dependence in full power on my mind. I read Jones's Scriptural Doctrine of the Trinity. This requiring not *a comprehending*, but a *belief*, of the doctrine, harmonized with my views and feelings. But he appears to me to confound a unity in the *persons* of the Godhead, with a unity of *office*. Surely, the Father, Son, and Spirit, are represented, for instance, in justifying a believer, in different respects or modes.—I must not enlarge.

In learning, I am a child; in doctrinal divinity, a learner; in experience, a believer. I believe "The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." I cannot *explain* this mystery, or these mysteries; but "these things I desire to look into;" and whilst I am "looking on," I find it a mystery still—a great mystery; but to

me I trust it is "a mystery of godliness;" doctrinal, experimental, and practical: nor have I ever found any system, a substitute for "the form of sound words." You and I baptize "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you and your's,

Very sincerely,

JOHN COOKE.

P.S.—Do not the Arians and Socinians, in their attempt to remove "the great mystery of godliness," leave us without any mystery of godliness? And, in the place of it, mysteries of ungodliness, error, and absurdity? They remind me of the late angel of a man, Mr. Montague, before whom the famous Wilks could never swear. His nephew, a youth, said, "Sir, I believe some parts of the Bible." "Great condescension in *you*, no doubt," (the uncle replied) "to believe *any* thing your Maker has said. Vain boy! whether you believe it or not, that word with which you trifle, the same shall judge you in the last day!"

LETTER LIX.—TO A UNITARIAN.

My dear Brother,

I AM greatly obliged and gratified by your letter. It is such as I expected from the influence of that circle of relations and associations in which you were born and bred. The doctrine of the Godhead, as stated in your letter, and received in your earliest years, "is of *man*;" and "without controversy," *small* was "the mystery of your godliness;" for it did not embrace "God manifest in the flesh." Your God was the God of the *Deist*, the *Mahometan*, the *Socinian*, and the God of the *Christless Jew*. The true Godhead cannot be perceived but by faith in divine revelation; he is unseen and unknown to unbelievers. I *comprehend* God, is no article of faith: "as well might a small circle contain a greater!" God knows himself, and has revealed himself; and the mind is at rest, that can say, in the light and faith of divine revelation, "I BELIEVE in God." But, "none but a God can comprehend God! yet, such

is "the simplicity that is in Christ," and his revelation, that he addresses little children in knowledge, faith, and experience, "because *they* have *known* the *Father!*" The Father knows the Son; the Son knows the Father; the Spirit *searches* and *reveals* the deep things of God. We cannot learn the first letter of the alphabet of divine revelation, except we learn as "a little child."—The spirit of a learner, a disciple of Jesus, cries, "what saith the Scriptures? What I know not teach thou me." He leans not to his own understanding; but trusts in the (word of) the Lord, with all his heart. Should he enquire after God with proud conceit, with faith in his reason or imagination, he will prove the Scriptures, but not understand them. "He that trusteth (believes in) his own heart, is a fool." He speculates, indulges curiosity, imagines, explains (away) the divine record; forms an analogy between God and himself, as one person, as totally without any notion, how Father, Son, and Spirit are one God,—as how "body, soul, and spirit," are one man! Proud ignorance, presumptuous curiosity, unbelief, trifling speculation, and worldly affections, form no qualification, to "learn of Jesus, the mind of Jesus." No! "he that is spiritual discerns the things of the Spirit!"

When under my first concern to acquire clear views of the scriptural character of God, one voice cried, "lo! here;" consult Owen, Gill, and Jones. I did so: but all their attempts to state and illustrate *eternal generation*, confounded me. On divinity in general, and the offices of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the clear, evangelical, and profound Owen, is second to no writer, in my view. "Lo! there," next invited me to Dr. Price, Dr. Priestley, and these authors I read with fear and prayer. The daring spirit which pervaded their writings;—their contradictions of each other; their impudent reproach of all pious and learned Calvinists, as bigots and idolators; their awful freedom with the Sacred Word, in omissions, additions, and forced constructions, left me another Jesus, another gospel, another Spirit. Sickened, disgusted, and indignant, I returned to "the form of *sound* words;" words which I found promoted a sound, healthy, constitution of soul. I "took fast hold of instruction," and now felt like Noah's dove, on Noah's ark, after wandering and fluttering over the restless waves. Like Christian, in the Pilgrim's Progress, I found my roll!

I am not the only "silly dove," that has wandered from, and

returned to the ark, and which a friendly hand from its window, has taken into it: for there I rejoice to meet you, out of breath, but out of danger! The raven found agreeable food without the ark, and the dove within it: I too, was impoverished and jaded, while hovering over the waves and mire of Socinian errors, in the dense and chilling atmosphere of speculating unbelief, and uncertain conjecture: but since, "the love of the Father," in all its expressions; "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," in the whole of his Mediatorial work; and "the communion of the Holy Spirit," in his discoveries and operations, with the word, has been my aim, my centre, and my rest.

Your's, &c.

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LX.—TO A BACKSLIDER.

Maidenhead.

Dear Brother,

THE word of God is quick and powerful, to wound and to heal; to kill and make alive. There is no Nebuchadnezzar, whose loins it cannot loosen, whose knees it cannot knock against each other, and whose thoughts it cannot arm against him. Nor is there any Manasseh, Magdalene, or Saul;—nay more, no backsliding David, Solomon, or Peter, whom it cannot heal. Why do you despair?

First, because your guilt is *singular*, in its aggravations. You say, it has been contracted against *knowledge*,—against *mercy*,—against warnings, afflictions, and deliverances. Sins after sincere resolutions against them;—sins after answers to prayers,—after high enjoyments and faithful reproof of sin in others. Yea, after God has blessed your preaching and conversation to others,—to convert, console, direct and establish them.

Secondly—You are confounded with the frequency, the variety, the extent of your backslidings.

Thirdly—You have, under the power of sin, been the occasion of sin in others, by example, by negligence, by unfaithfulness.

Fourthly—You are perplexed in judgment, not knowing how to make restitution and extricate yourself.

Fifthly—You feel the power of sin in your affections; and the guilt of it on your conscience, filling you with fear, despondency, and the apprehensions of being put to shame, before those to whom you have been useful, as witnesses against your hypocrisy.

I have given a more full detail of your sin and misery than you would give to any creature. You ask what can I say to such a case? I answer:

First—That your sins are above description and beyond conception, great and aggravated. "God is greater than your heart; and knoweth ALL things."

Secondly—They are pardonable; and if you think they are not, you add a greater sin to them than all the rest, the sin of UNBELIEF. You "limit the Holy One of Israel," in his mercy to pardon, his power to subdue sin; and the infinite merit of Christ in his atonement, righteousness, and intercession. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. He is able to save to the UTTERMOST.

Thirdly—Your duty is plain. Not to say "there is no hope." Despair "tramples under foot the blood of the Son of God;"—represents God "such an one as yourself,"—gives Satan full power as accuser and tormentor; and paralyses all the faculties of the soul. Consider *examples* in David. "Lord, pardon my iniquity, though it is great."—Psalm xxv., Psalm li., and Psalm cxxx. Plead the multitude, the magnitude of the divine mercies. Cry out of the *depths*. Look at Peter and Solomon.

Consider your *warrant*. Hos. xiv. 1, 2. Confess your sin, guilt, and weakness. Pray to God "to take away all iniquity." Is any thing too hard for the Lord?

"Where sin aboundeth" in guilt, power, and aggravations; he can make "grace much more abound."

Consider the grandeur of God. "His thoughts are not your thoughts;" but "as the heavens are higher than the earth,"—more extensive and glorious, so are "his thoughts and ways above your's."

Consider the *promises* to the returning sinner. Hos. xiv. "I will heal their backslidings;" that is, pardon, and sanctify, and comfort them. Isa. lv. "I will ABUNDANTLY pardon."

Consider the exhortations: "O Israel! *return! return*, O backsliding children! Turn ye, turn ye!

Consider the patience and long-suffering of God. You are spared, warned, invited, commanded to return. "He waiteth to be gracious; and will be exalted in having mercy upon you," on your return.

Fourthly—Suppose your sins were even greater than they are. If you had sinned as ADAM, against knowledge, kindness, and favour, to ruin a world! He drew back even from knowledge, holiness, and happiness, in PERFECTION! Yet the promise of a Saviour was proclaimed to him, to encourage hope, and repentance, and pardon.

Fifthly—Let no objection become your rule of conduct.

You say your sins are singular. Others think the same. Does the word of God allow this to be an objection to hope and prayer?

Your heart is hard. "God can take away the stony heart; and give a heart of flesh."

But you are "the chief of sinners," on account of your aggravated backslidings. "This is a faithful, true saying; and worthy of ALL acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." But you cannot *pray*. Try, mourn, confess your weakness. Ask, seek, wait for "the spirit of grace and supplication."

But you have indulged sin so long! admire the long suffering of God. Remember "a thousand years" of guilt, are as "one day" to infinite mercy, and infinite merit.

You complain that you are entangled and perplexed, and see no way of escape.

But the divine understanding is infinite; "The Lord knows how to deliver the sinner, the backslider, out of temptation. HE can MAKE a way of escape.

But the divine THREATENINGS!

They are merciful warnings to urge your flight to Christ, and grace, "the refuge set before you."

You fear it is now too late.

"Behold! now is the accepted time. Behold! now is the day of salvation."

Remember, it is the mercy of an infinite God, and the truth of him "who cannot lie," that I exhort you to haste. I write it to you, even to *you*; and I write as "one that must give an account, with solemn sympathy. "Fear not, only believe!"

Your's, &c. J. COOKE.

Letter LXI.—To the Same.

My dear suffering Brother,

"The *stain* and defiling effect of sin feeds your despondency."

I am glad you perceive and feel it.

Is this singular? Did not David suffer the same? If not, what mean his prayers, "wash me, cleanse me, wash me thoroughly,—cleanse thou me from secret faults?"

Did it destroy his hope? No! he prayed and hoped, though the blood of sprinkling, to be made "whiter than snow."

And does not the infinite efficacy of the blood of Christ, and the promises of God warrant such a hope? Yea, although your sins have left a scarlet and crimson dye? Isa. i. 18. Heb. ix. 14. 1 John i. 7. Suppose the guilt and stain equalled those of all in "the whole world," that believe in Jesus? Dare you despair? 1 John i. 1, 2.

Look up to Heaven; see the number of spirits there, which have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb?"

They wept and suffered here for Christ; but neither tears nor tribulations had any share in washing them from their sins. Whatever difference in age or degrees of sin, the sinner of five, or five hundred years, swells the same note,—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory!" To "the blood of sprinkling, and the sanctification of the Spirit," all ascribe their pardon and purity. Remember, "the fountain" of a Saviour's merit, and the fullness of the Spirit's grace, are still "open—open for sin and uncleanness." Try it: apply to Jesus, "Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Wait on him—pray to him—trust in him.

Probatum est,

By Your's, &c.

J. Cooke.

LETTER LXII.—TO A PERSON IN A STATE OF DESPONDENCY.

My dear Sir,

"THE heavy bar" you complain of, which "shuts you up in despair, is not fixed by God; but by Satan and yourself. That bar is," Rev. xxii. 11. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." If this were a *declaration*, which respected the *present* time, then, not one soul more could be converted! But it is a *prophecy;* and cannot refer to your *present* state. Read and understand. The Lord Jesus, in the eleventh verse, saith, "the time is AT HAND!" It is not *come:*—he waits, and yet affords time for repentance. Bless his name. Although the time of your death is *near*, "is at hand," it is not come. "The lamp holds out to burn;" the lamp of life and the lamp of salvation. The guilty may yet be pardoned,—the filthy may yet be cleansed: and I do not despair of you. The door of mercy is yet open,—the day of grace still continues. "To day if you will hear his voice," come, and he will "forgive all your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." Then, should he come, he that is made righteous, shall be righteous still; and he that is sanctified, shall be holy still!" Do not linger. "Make haste and delay not;" for "behold! he comes quickly." In the mean time, "WHOSOEVER WILL, let him come;" and Jesus will in no wise, on no consideration, cast him out." You think it too late; but you mistook the hour. The day is far spent, but not ended. The voice of mercy cries after you, "RETURN." May the voice of persevering prayer echo, "turn thou me, and I shall be turned." I trust "Grace will reign" in your pardon, purity, and peace, in answer to the prayer of

Your's, &c.
J. COOKE.

Letter LXIII.—To a Minister unknown.

(*On Preparing Sermons.*)

My dear Brother,

Your plan of writing in a folio volume the heads and substance of printed sermons, that you may be always ready for the pulpit, is followed by many evil consequences.

It destroys the habit of *thinking*, and produces a servile confinement to other men's trains of thought. A clergyman once observed, that "the Dissenters possessed an advantage over the clergy, who had their doctrines, discipline and prayers, made for them by acts of parliament."

Thousands of the clergy do not *think*, but transcribe and read what is already published, whereas the Dissenters stand or fall by their *characters* and *talents*. They *must* read and think, because their hearers do." And he allowed at the same time, that "this occasioned them to preach at one time what they contradicted at another, by taking for granted that those clergymen had published the sentiments of the Church of England."

Hence you hear the remark, that Mr. W. sometimes reads an evangelical sermon, though the general strain of his preaching is mere morality without the doctrines of grace.

When a clergyman lately preached a visitation sermon, he refused the requests of his friends to print it, until they were so offended by his apparent obstinacy, that he felt himself obliged to inform them, the sermon was already in print!

And if a dissenting brother should accustom himself to *read* the largest part of his sermon, and call it preaching by *notes*, he will fall into the same error. Mr. T., a dissenting minister, adopted your plan, and being stationed at B———, his brethren heard him; and one of them said, "Brother T. I have heard you preach four times, and greatly admired the sermons. I should think you enjoyed a retentive memory; but I see you *read* much. I had read your four sermons before I heard you preach them, as they are in the volume of Mr. Mason, of America, which I can show you. I should very much like to hear one of your own sermons. To preach or read

other men's sermons under pretence of preaching from *notes*, must subject you to the reproach of idleness, of vanity, of hypocrisy, and of being a servile detailer. Some hearers who are also *readers*, exclaim, "alas! master, it was borrowed." By such hypocritical servility you "neglect the gift that is your own," depend on "an arm of flesh;" and "your heart departeth from the Lord." You seek a message from *man*, rather than from GOD; and have reason to exclaim, "my leanness, my leanness!" And to my knowledge, the most experienced Christians among your hearers are uttering the same complaint. I knew a minister who followed your plan, until he read Mr. Matthew Henry's Comment in the Pulpit. As your best hearers have found you out, "be sure your *sin* will find you out," in a barren ministry and alienated hearers. You receive as you ask, the free thoughts of your affectionate brother,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXIV.—TO THE SAME.

Dear Brother,

You say, "various and numerous engagements, occasion your preaching other men's sermons." So say your hearers. I know a preacher who has adopted your plan, although, through shame, he denies it. He is engaged all the week in business.

Your engagements in religious societies, anniversaries, and journies, occupy your time. The cause is good. The work is good. But is it all *your* proper work? Has vanity, popularity, the love of power, and influence, no share in your motives? Do you not neglect your own vineyard? And is not the *extreme* you indulge in, ministerial gadding and dissipation? Are not ministerial engagements at home, your first concern? The vows of God are upon you; and do not your hearers expect you to fulfil them? Are you not paid as *their* minister? Remember your ordination, your charge, your promise, your account! Adieu.

Your's, faithfully,

JOHN COOKE.

Letter LXV.—To the Same.

Dear Brother,

You say "you often meet me on public occasions; and can that be wrong in you, which is right in me?"

I answer, first, Yes; you may be wrong in accepting invitations to work which others are ready to perform, who could perform it as well, or better. Especially if you invite yourself by offers, or taking offence if you are not requested to preach.

Secondly,—If you neglect your studies and your people, to appear abroad; especially if you leave no time, until you have no heart, for serious and close study. This I can truly say, "by the grace of God," I never do. I regulate my acceptance of an invitation, by considering duties at home, necessity, probable usefulness; and, if obstacles present themselves, whether other ministers will not be present, who can answer the end.

Thirdly,—If I make a sacrifice, it is to my Master, at the call of duty; not to be seen and heard of men, but to serve, in the first instance, a poor brother minister, and the congregation of which Jesus says, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich."

Fourthly,—If such calls of duty have encroached on my studies, as sometimes one visit breaks into three days, I return home hungry, make up the time from hours taken from my bed; and that not as a task, but as a pleasant duty.

My friend Z. has read and studied much, in past years, (which has not been your case), and now says his engagements from home have deprived him of much personal religion, with the increase of good living and animal spirits. But his sermons *now* are cold, heartless, unimpressive. His hearers at home and abroad complain he is not the same man. "The salt has lost its savour," in a lamentable degree.

You say, look at ——— and ———; I do; and admire their zeal, their prudence, their diligence, in discharging important duties to which *they are called*. Where are their flocks? Attended by others *appointed* in their stead; and when they are at home, they preach their own sermons. If you are called to "go and do likewise," let your hearers know it, that they also may provide one to

fill the duties of that sphere which you profess to fulfil, and do not. But until you have leave of absence by your Master, to the extent now taken, "mind your own business" more, and do not idly sacrifice your studies for stolen sermons, to the neglect of your own soul's prosperity, and the profit of your hearers.

With deep humility for the freedom taken, although requested,

I am,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXVI.—TO A MINISTER, UNKNOWN.

(*On the best Style for Sermons.*)

Dear Brother,

"You think your style and mode of preaching good, but you are open to conviction." I do not affirm that your style is *not good* as a *writer*, but as a *preacher*. The use of long, compound, hard words in the pulpit, I dislike. Surely I could use them too; I have the best dictionaries. But although a *few* hearers may understand them, they would also understand *more simple language*; and they do not, or ought not, to be gratified at the expense of your *usefulness*. The poor and illiterate are the majority of your hearers, and their profit cannot go beyond their understanding. You may make a display, preach yourself and please yourself, by a lofty and affected style, but you starve the poor, provoke their prejudices, waste their time, and abuse your opportunity of usefulness. Your best hearers of education, can gratify their *taste* by reading the best composition; and, however long and obscure the periods, they can read them over, two or three times. This cannot be done in hearing. You should, therefore, preach not only so plainly that you *may* be understood, but so as you cannot be *misunderstood*.

Your plan will lessen the esteem of your hearers for you; especially when they hear another minister whose aim is to *convince* and *impress*. This will excite your jealousy, and disturb your peace. The great John Howe called such conduct, "playing the fool." An able minister, on hearing a brother preach in a sublime style,

under which the hearers slept, said to him, "Brother, I think if I had your talents, I would endeavour to make a better use of them." When I heard clergymen read in language above my reach, I admired the men, and said they preached *fine* sermons: but after I heard "a crucified Christ preached in a crucified style," I trembled for such stage actors.—"Look unto Jesus" as your example: "let the mind be in you which was in him." You read, "the common people heard him gladly:" would this have been so if he had preached or read in a composition and style, above their understanding? Remember you are not *writing* in the pulpit, but *speaking*; and your congregation not reading, but hearing. Consider the end of your office;—to convert sinners, edify believers, and take the lead in worship. Speak not in "an unknown tongue;" put not a veil on the truth, like a minister who said he was addressing a congregation of lace-makers and farmers' servants, and then informed them, "his text contained a noble prosopopèia; that is, he added, a fine personification." And another, who said he should "consider his subject theologically, metaphysically, and morally." With "great plainness of speech commend yourself to *every* man's conscience as in the sight of God." Seek out acceptable words; but they cannot be such, if unintelligible. You have tried your plan some years, and "what fruit have you?" I have tried an opposite plan, which God has sealed by numerous converts. I *could* use a language above my hearers, but then I should only "beat the air, and give an uncertain sound." As a preacher, "by thy WORDS thou shalt be justified, or by thy *words* thou shalt be condemned."

Your's sincerely,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXVII.—TO THE SAME.

Dear Brother,

"You are pleased with my faithfulness, but think that many who are understood, are very disgusting." True; by a vulgar, coarse, light, chit-chat manner of preaching, they make the people laugh,—"court a grin when they should woo a soul." They strain a metaphor until it evaporates. Never at a loss, they coin a story which they assure

you they heard, and say many witty things. They preach themselves; but not in the same way as the vain actor does. But whether too high or too low, both miss the mark. Yet you observe, "they do good." True; and so may a quack, by the medicine he sells; but, like him, they do more hurt than good; while both may promote their temporal profit, aad obtain the applause of the ignorant. The wise, faithful, and diligent apothecary, does good intentionally; restores health, preserves life, and raises his character. If patients die under such, "their blood will not be required at their hands." Apply this to yourself,

And your's, faithfully,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXVIII.

(On the Holy Spirit's Influences.)

Dear Sir,

THE subject of the Holy Spirit's operations in the *present day*, as you express it, is of transcendent importance. I may possess even the *miraculous* gifts of the Spirit, without his *graces*: yet *one* "fruit of the Spirit," as the Spirit of holiness, is of more value to me than all mere gifts. Gifts may dwell in a wicked man; but grace changes the heart and character. Gifts fail; but *love* never faileth,--NEVER! Nor does conversion necessarily follow, in those who witness miracles: witness the miracles of Moses, of the prophets, the apostles, and those of Christ. "Seeing and hearing, they saw and heard not." Some blasphemed the doctrines, and stoned the preachers. But real Christians are said to be *quickened* and *born* of the Spirit: to be enlightened and sanctified, comforted, led, and sealed by the Spirit.

Sound sentiments and decent forms may exist, without the spirit of the gospel, as really as zeal against forms, phrases, and opinions; singularity of dress and of speech, may cover guile, fraud, pride, and bad tempers. Sound sentiments, fiery zeal, and bold profession of the truth, may be found where "the HEART is not SOUND in God's statutes."

The gifts of preaching and praying, the advantages of hearing

the best preachers, and reading the best books;—the warnings of providence in others, the greatest personal afflictions have left many professors unchaste, dishonest, covetous, ambitious, and malignant. What influence then can convert the soul to God? The influences of the spirit of God, in his gracious operations. But how are you to *decide*—when the effects are from the Spirit of God? By the same rule that you decide that the *creation*, *miracles*, *prophecy*, the *gift of tongues*, are from the divine Spirit. The evidence that I am the subject of the saving influences of the Holy Spirit, is *within* me. I am conscious of my own *feeling*: I know that I feel love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith. I feel a love to "all goodness, righteousness, truth. This is a fact: of this I am as certain as of my own thoughts and feelings. But I cannot prove *from my consciousness*, that these holy principles and tempers are the effects of the Spirit's operation. I am conscious of them, and the word of God ascribes them to the Holy Spirit.—Ephes. v. 9.—Gal. v. 22.

Your's, in the truth,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXIX.—TO THE SAME.

My dear Sir,

You are wrong in limiting the operations of the Holy Spirit to time, manner, or degree. You overlook the *sovereignty* of his operations, and the *sufficiency* of his grace. The wind bloweth where, when, and as it listeth," and we may have more wind in one hour than in six months following. This accounts for the slow progress of some, and the rapid increase of faith, fortitude, patience, and peace in others. Witness the penitent on the cross! and the case of those condemned malefactors in Newgate, 1748—who prayed and sang, under a sense of pardoning mercy. The bell-men came at the appointed hour, as usual, to announce, "remember this day you must die!" They exclaimed, "welcome news, welcome news!" Is the spirit of the Lord straightened? Read, pray, trust, wait, and "this free spirit" will "work in you to will, and to do, of his

good pleasure." And his pleasure is, that "as your day" of duty and trial, "so your strength shall be," to you and

"Yours, in one spirit,"

J. COOKE.

LETTER LXX.—TO A MINISTER, UNKNOWN.

(On the Danger of Starting Difficulties.)

My dear Brother,

You appear too fond of raising objections against the most important truths of revelation, in conversation with your hearers, and brother ministers. Whatever may be your motives, they are suspected, and not without reason. First, because you make it your *amusement*. Like the spider, you spread your web to entangle souls in difficulty, and feel gratified in what gives them pain.

Secondly,—You leave the difficulty unexplained, unsettle those minds you ought to establish, and afford the enemy of souls an advantage against them.

Thirdly,—You diminish their esteem of you; excite suspicions that you are as ignorant of what you believe as they are; and instead of inducing them to think you are a wonderful man, you compel them to think you are trifling with their souls and your own; disgracing instead of "magnifying your office." Your vanity may deem it very clever; but when your eyes are opened, you will find "the serpent has beguiled you;" that you have alienated your hearers, and formed a thick cloud "of guilt over your soul." I asked Mr. J——, minister at R————, what was the *first* step towards that complication of errors, into which he had gradually fallen? I was the more concerned to know, because he had reduced a congregation of six hundred hearers, to fifty.

His answer was, "I cherished a love of disputation, not caring which side I took, until I reasoned myself too far to retract; and believed that as true, which before I believed to be false."

I inquired his *motive*? He answered, "It was my amusement; it fed my vanity, which was often flattered by those who admired my

acuteness as a reasoner. I first embraced, imputed, and denied imparted holiness; laughed at the new birth, and the Spirit's operations, opposed all Christian experience, and ended by entering the school of Winchester. At length I denied the existence of sin, since the death of Christ, while what I once allowed to be the worst of sins, secretly reigned over me!"

Will you secretly say, is thy brother "a dog" or an infidel?—Do you expect that I shall go such a length in error and sin? God forbid! But Mr. J—— assured me, that he always engaged in a dispute without fear of *himself* being ensnared, while he perplexed the judgment of others. Take a few cautions. "Trust in the Lord," as revealed, "with all thy heart; and lean not to thine own understanding." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "He that trusteth (*believeth*) his own heart, is a fool." Receive an exhortation. Repent of your folly, levity, vanity, cruelty and presumption. Strengthen the weak. Beware, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility," by disputing against the truth he believed, "So your mind should be corrupted, from the simplicity that is in Christ" Imitate your Master, whose words are not "yea and nay" but yea, and amen." Every Christian—much more a Christian Minister, should be "a Nathaniel, in whom is no guile."

I am, very sincerely your's,

J. Cooke.

Letter LXXI.—To a Minister unknown.

(*A Conversation becoming the Gospel.*)

Dear Sir,

Sitting at the table of our friend, with a large company the other day, a lady remarked, that you had all the *fun* at your end of the table; and as she was accustomed to your drollery, she appeared mortified that I did not so enliven *our* end of the table.

"Madam," said I, "your complaint, although mortifying to you, is not so to me. I am prepared for useful conversation, but not for fun. Here are three ministers of Christ, and our "conversation ought to be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ." If I wished

to laugh at conversation, half nonsense, and half falsehood, I would choose other company; but I am going to preach to you this evening, and I do not wish you to think I do not believe my own sermon. Your minister is witty at the expence of truth, duty, and usefulness. I wish to be cheerful, joyful, and grateful, in a manner corresponding to the love of Christ; the redemption of Christ; the Spirit, word, and salvation of Christ.

"Very true, Sir," replied the lady, and joined me in conversing on better things. We gained the ears of the company. In a walk after dinner, a hearer at the table thanked me; especially as there were in the company, those who stumbled at the levity of their minister; and one who avowed his infidelity. A second remarked, with apparent grief, that his minister so trifled with truth out of the pulpit, that when in it, he doubted even the truth of God when it came from his mouth. He added, Mr. E——'s ministry does little good, but his conversation does much injury. I endeavoured to impress my own soul with the importance of this visit, and to "be ready to every GOOD WORD." If "the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life," what should the mouth of a minister be? May I be "apt to teach;" able from study, and disposed by grace.

With a humble sense of unfaithfulness, I am, kindly your's,

J. COOKE.

LETTER LXXII.—ON PRAYER.

THE *spirit* of prayer, my dear friend, is as distinct from, and superior to the *letter*, as the soul to the body. It is a very *serious*, *solemn* business with God. I cannot express the degree in which it appears interesting, when I am enabled to exercise it. Religion then appears the *only reality* that is truly interesting to man. At least, not any thing appears so without it. The *principle* of such prayer exalts the mind above worldly influence: I mean *faith*—faith in the PRESENCE of God, as *gracious*, *faithful*, all-sufficient, wise, and powerful. The *warrant* for this is divine truth. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? Whither can I go from his presence? Am not I a God at hand? Thy father *is* in secret, and SEES in secret. He is about my bed! The Lord is NIGH to all them that call upon

him *in truth*." Prayer is "coming to GOD, drawing near to GOD." And when, by faith, "I set the Lord before me, I SEE him, "though" *invisible* "to sense.

This is very different from the mere formality of repeating the Popish or English forms of prayer; and equally different from the mere repetition of words and phrases in a dissenting meeting, or a social prayer-meeting. Prayer *to* God, not a prayer for man's acceptance, is a prayer which contains a man's heart in it, which is often accompanied by an impression of a promise, corresponding to the earnest desire; and "whilst I am yet speaking," the blessed God, by raising faith and expectation, or inspiring the soul with peaceful resignation, virtually says, "here I am!"

In *such* prayer, I feel satisfied that it meets acceptance—that if consistent with the wisest love in the universe, the petition shall be answered for myself, my relative, my friend, or acquaintance.

It is also followed by a deep, delightful calm, and grateful RESIGNATION to the *government* of *God in Christ*, in the operations of his *Spirit* and *providence*.

I do not wonder at the resolution of that lovely man, Mr. Hervey, on the bed of illness, "If God shall spare my life, I will read less, and pray more." The *business*, the *pleasure*, the honour, the advantages of prayer press on my spirit, with increasing force, every day. I took my pen to express the glory that overshadowed my soul on the subject of prayer, but I cannot. If a better season occur, I will write again. Perhaps it is best that you should obtain it in a manner more satisfying,—I mean by an attempt to "*pray* in prayer." And may that assistance accompany the attempt, which shall prove to you that it is *divine*; and that its effect is "praying in the Holy Ghost," in you and your affectionate friend,

J. COOKE.

LETTER LXXIII.—TO A PERSON UNDER CONVICTIONS.

Dear Sir,

You have opened some of your gloomy thoughts on the most important doctrine of the Gospel—"the forgiveness of sins;" and I shall open more of them, that I may not appear to write "smooth

things and deceits;" but rather assist you in "thinking soberly as you ought to think" of your sins, yourself, and the grace of God. And being what you are, and where you are—"a very great sinner, the very greatest sinner upon earth."—This is your judgment; and it may be false, or it may be *true*. I shall take the latter for granted, as possible, without allowing either you, myself, or any creature in the universe, a capacity to know this, without a special revelation from God.

If you are the greatest sinner on earth—because you are ON EARTH, and not in hell—your pardon, purification, and salvation, are possible. On earth, "WONDERS of grace to God belong." Suppose a distressed soul were to apply to *you*, as you may to *me*, and say, he seriously and deliberately deemed himself to be the greatest sinner upon earth, and that hope would in him, be *presumption!* Would not you ask him whether, in cherishing *despair* of pardon, he was not committing the greatest sin, by limiting the mercy of God, the merit of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit? "Thou that teachest another," that UNBELIEF in HIM, is a sin of the blackest hue, "teachest thou not thyself," that it is equally criminal in *thyself?* Why indulge this absurd and destructive "*partiality?*" Are you prepared to say, that your guilt "abounds much more" than infinite grace, infinite merit, and infinite power? Suppose your guilt exceeds that of Adam, which ruined himself and all his posterity? Cannot that "blood which cleanseth from ALL sin," cleanse you? Cannot that "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of THE WORLD," take away your sin? What! must you be lost, even if the Saviour should do "his uttermost to save" you? Is "the arm of the Lord shortened," that he cannot make "the righteousness of God" sufficiently powerful for your salvation? Realize the worst, the very worst of your sins; look at their number, their magnitude, their repetitions, their aggravations, and the length of time during which you have been aggravating them. Then turn to "the word of grace," which declares, that "where sin ABOUNDETH, grace does equally abound, "MORE abound! *much* more abound!" Then prostrate yourself at "the throne of grace" in dependence on the great atonement, and you will find, even *you*, that "God is able to do, exceeding abundantly, ABOVE ALL that you can ASK, or even THINK!" It has been proved,

By your's, in real sympathy,

JOHN COOKE.

Letter LXXIV.—To the Same.

No, my distressed correspondent, I am not "weary in well-doing," if meeting your objections be such. I believe you to be "serious now at last," in seeking the life of your soul. You wish me to think "your case *singular*." I do admit it to be singular in reasoning with you, because *you* affirm it; but unless you knew the sins of others which have been pardoned, although "as scarlet and crimson," you cannot *prove* your sins to be greater than their sins. Surely what *you know* of your own sins, cannot be equal to the criminality which "he who knoweth all things," knows of the criminality of millions whom he has pardoned! And be assured that God sees more of "the sinfulness of sin," in a single transgression, than you perceive in the sum total of your iniquities. But he also knows and teaches you, that "as the heavens exceed the earth" in height, extent, and grandeur, so his mercy exceeds your sins, your faith, and your utmost reach of thought. Witness,

John Cooke.

Letter LXXV.—To a Penitent Backslider.

My dear Sir,

You form an *exception* against yourself, fearing that you are not a *backslider*, as that character you think applies to those, and those *only*, who are *real* believers; and suppose from the peculiarity of your sins, that you cannot be a partaker of the *grace* of God. This is founded in *mistake*, as the sin of backsliding is charged on the Israelites as a body; and many of them whose hearts were unrenewed, were guilty of backsliding from their principles, their external worship, their moral conduct, and their engagements, even to Idolatry: but they were all commanded "to *return*."

But even admitting that your profession has been hypocritical, or that, in your best estate, you *deceived* yourself for years; are you therefore bound to despair, as one beyond the reach of mercy? The threatenings against the hypocrite alarm you. Be it so: is it not mercy that detects your hypocrisy, and awakens your concern, even *now*, to be saved from it? If you die under the power and

guilt of *one* sin you perish; and if through grace you repent of the sins of "numerous years," you will obtain mercy.

One moment you think your past convictions, sorrow, prayers, hopes, and joys, must have been the effects of the grace of God.

Then you review the number, extent, duration, and aggravations of your sins, and conclude, you could not possibly have been converted to God. You cannot decide the question; nor will I attempt it, because I neither know, nor desire to know, how far it is possible for a converted soul to wander from God. The judgment day alone will disclose this. If you, with all your past feelings and purposes, were deceived, how can any soul that backslides, frequently, or for a long time, be sure of his conversion? How, indeed! If sin does not produce *doubts* of our sincerity; and *fears* of divine displeasure, it must produce *blindness* and *hardness* of *heart*.

If under all your profession you have sinned against both *knowledge* and *experience* of the grace of God; or have deceived your soul by familiarity with sin, and the means of grace, without being "*renewed* in the spirit of your mind," you are a sinner of the deepest dye. In either case, "none but a power divinely strong, can turn the current of your soul:" yet, you will add sin to sin, by thinking or acting, as if your salvation were "too hard for the Lord." Say not, "there is no hope;" for despair is the death-wound to relief, or even an *attempt* to obtain it. I will consider you a sinner, a great sinner, a self-condemned and lost sinner. I will view you as in the class of the *greatest* sinners; and of these, "the chief." In this condition, you are a *helpless* sinner; but not a *hopeless* one. It is *possible* you may be saved. You are the greatest sinner on earth—in your own apprehension; but you are *on earth*, within the sphere of saving mercy. You are not in hell. "A brand," indeed; but God can "pluck you out of the fire!"

You are yet "in the body,"—you are yet a *man;* and the "voice" of grace "is to the sons of men." You ask, if I ever knew one with the same views of himself, recovered? Yes, and with the addition of a heart, so hard, as not to be able to pray for mercy! But you object, "if God will be inquired of," and they could not inquire of, and pray to him, what then? Then, I have read the word of God to them—conversed with them—inquired, and prayed with, and for them, as opportunity presented itself; and God has heard my prayer for them, as he did the prayer of Job for his friends; and although some

of them have never recovered *health*, but suffered greatly,—" thou, O God, wast a God that forgavest them, though thou didst take vengeance on their inventions."

Your's, &c.
J. COOKE.

LETTER LXXVI.—TO THE SAME.

My dear Sir,

IF you considered yourself as an unconverted sinner, awakened to a solicitude for salvation, or as a partaker of the grace of God, under the guilt of aggravated backslidings, you admit there would be *scriptural warrants* for hope. But you fear that you are neither the one nor the other. Suppose your complaint to be just, so far as relates to the *description* of your character, still you are *unconverted*, and awakened to a sense of your danger; and danger increased by sinning for a long season against convictions, concern, resolutions, and encouragements under the means of grace, and the operations of many afflictions. What shall I say to you? Rather, "what saith the scriptures?" They say, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,"—his thoughts of continuing in sin, his despairing thoughts of divine mercy and grace; "let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

Are you not an unrighteous and wicked man, by your own description? Wicked beyond any heathen, or newly awakened sinner under the Christian dispensation? Nevertheless, a gracious God allows, yea commands you to return, with the assurance of your finding mercy; reject your *own* thoughts,—dwell on the thoughts of God. Let them become *your* thoughts, and under their influence return, seek the Lord, and "believe on him that justifieth the UNGODLY." Yes, let the wicked, the chief of sinners, return. "HIM!" you exclaim. Yes, let even HIM return, and mercy "waiteth to be gracious." God makes no *exception* to you. He exhorts, invites, encourages you. If you are enabled to comply, though your "sin has abounded," his grace will much more abound towards you, in pardon, acceptance, peace, and consolation. "Grace be with you," and your's,

JOHN COOKE.

Letter LXXVII.—To a Friend.

(*On Mr. Wesley's Character and Labours.*)

My dear Sir,

I have read Mr. Wesley's Life and Works, in general, which are all in my study. I am thankful that my mind has not been moved by those parts of his works in which he writes so obscurely on the doctrine of *justification*; and, as it appears to me, in which he quibbles on the phrases—"the imputed righteousness of Christ," which he preached twelve years, and then renounced, for the phrase —"the righteousness of faith." They both mean the same thing, are both liable to equal abuse; but Mr. Wesley thought otherwise.

He preached perfection, as attainable in this life; but always said he had not attained it. On this subject, he does not *edify me*. He writes on justification like a *Calvinist*, when he contends with a *Baptist*; but when he contends with Mr. Hervey, he is the *Arminian*. There are many peculiarities in his volumes, some trifling, some contradictious; others rash, arbitrary, and savour of bigotry.

But I make great allowance for his hasty manner of writing. He wrote fast, wrote much. Had he written less, he had written better. His journals contain much affected, dull, detail and repetition: too much display, too much of—*I* and *me*, which amounts to worse than nothing in a great man. Yet, I abhor "the gall of bitterness," with which Mr. Toplady has written against Mr. Wesley. You admire Toplady; so do I; but not his cruel, degrading censures against Mr. Wesley. When he *reasons* against Arminianism, I approve; but when he *rails* against the person and character of Mr. Wesley, I loathe his writings. You speak very freely of "John Wesley"—of "Wesley"—and of "old John." My dear Sir, render honour to whom honour is due. And is none due to the minister who preached the gospel through England and Ireland; preached it in the West Indies, and in America? The man who was sixty-five years in the ministry; fifty-two years an itinerant preacher; and from his own societies in *these* kingdoms, raised 300 itinerant, and 1000 local preachers, and governed, by a mind that could comprehend and combine, 80,000 persons in his different societies!

For fifty-two years, preaching two, three, and four sermons a day! and giving to the necessitous, 25,000*l.* "His own hands were his executors."

For fifty years, he travelled 4500 miles every year; one year with another.

Taking a mere glance at the character and talents, the voyages and journies, the labours and success, of Mr. John Wesley, greatly as I differ from him on some points of doctrine and discipline, I dare not speak lightly of him—a man who has been such a blessing to the world. No! Sir; I blush for Mr. Toplady, I blush for you, I blush for myself. You have not read his works,—I have; and I bless God for the gift of such a man to the world.—I feel my own insignificance by his side, in many respects, and rejoice in those GRAND, ESSENTIAL truths which he taught by his tongue and his pen.

Did you, my young brother, ever teach *the fall of man*,—the doctrine of ORIGINAL SIN,—free and full pardon through faith in the atonement of Christ,—the necessity and sufficiency of the Holy Spirit for regeneration, sanctification and comfort, with more precision, simplicity and effect, according to the sphere of your labour? Did you ever exalt the merit of the Saviour and the grace of the Father, as the medium and source of all spiritual good more than he? Pause, read, consider, and *then*, if in reality you in some points think you are more evangelical than Mr. Wesley,—be humble and thankful. If, in other respects, you should think he excelled you,—think it not beneath you, to imitate one by whom "Christ was magnified in his life and in his death."

Your's faithfully,

J. COOMBE.

LETTER LXXVIII.—TO THE SAME.

My dear Sir,

You allow that I have rendered you more moderate against the Methodists;—more rational; but you think Mr. Wesley was an enemy to *the sovereignty of God*. This is your mistake. He allows the sovereignty of God in the *creation*,—the *time* it was brought *into* existence,—its *duration*,—its *situation*, in the immensity of space,—

the number and magnitude of the stars,—the earth, with its properties and furniture,—the constitution and faculties of *man*,—the time, place, and circumstances of his birth,—the varieties of human intellect.

Yea, that he acts as a sovereign with irresistible power, in the moment of conversion. Yea, he allows "irresistible touches, during the course of our Christian warfare." Perhaps you think this is very partial, but it proves you not impartial. I am glad to agree with this great and good man, so far; but he does not go far enough for me. I adore the wise and gracious sovereignty of God, in the *whole* of man's salvation.

Your's truly,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXXIX.—TO THE SAME.

My dear Sir,

YOU say I have rendered you cautious; but you think I cannot vindicate Mr. Wesley in removing his ministers at pleasure, even from places where they have been most useful. I do not pretend to it. Mr. Wesley says, in his fifteenth volume of Journals and Letters, "I know, that were I, myself, to preach one whole year, in one place, I should preach both myself, and most of my congregation, asleep. Nor can I believe that it was ever the will of the Lord, that any congregation should have one teacher only."

This appears to me an error. If *he* were not qualified for one congregation, it is no proof that others are not. It also contradicts matter of fact; as it is clear, that some congregations find their own pastor's talents more edifying to them for forty years successively, than those of any other man. Mutual knowledge of each other, qualifies the minister to preach, and the hearers to receive, truths *peculiarly adapted* to their state, frame, trials, and obligations.

The shepherd knows *his flock* better than a stranger, and regulates his pastoral duties according to their exigencies. And it is no small advantage to a church and congregation, to "KNOW those that labour among them, and are over them in the Lord."

The seven churches to whom the Apostle John wrote, had each "a star" shining on them; each an angel, messenger, or minister of Christ. The church of England has its archbishops. Mr. Wesley was, during his life, the sole archbishop over his numerous societies and ministers. As a protestant, independent minister, I acknowledge Jesus Christ, and HIM ONLY, as the arch or "chief Bishop." No other bishop is my master in religion. "ONE is your master in Christ; and all ye are brethren." This was spoken to the followers and apostles of Christ. There was no *arch* apostle.

I have preached for six weeks together, to Mr. Whitfield's congregations. They treated me with the greatest kindness; but what did I know of them, or they of me? Persons have applied to me for tickets of admission to the Lord's table. I proposed a time to converse with them, mention them to the church, inquire into their characters. They were offended. A strange minister has asked me, why I did not admit such persons to the table, who had applauded his sermons. He was sure they were "elect vessels." It may be so, I answered; but at present, they are very filthy vessels, living in public sins. I know a minister who boasts of a thousand communicants, but when any of them have joined us, they have acknowledged, that the minister never *once* spoke to them on the state of their souls, but "one of the *committee* gave them a ticket." His congregation is supplied by a succession of able ministers, who fill his place; but were he the minister for one year, I would not answer for the congregation keeping *awake*, or even keeping their *seats*.

Your's faithfully,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXXX.—TO A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

Dear Sir,

IT has been asserted, "that half of the diseases to which we are prone, originate in the influence of the passions on the human body." Thus love and anger, grief and hope, envy and jealousy, hope and fear, agitate, elevate or depress, kill or cure.

"We are momentarily influenced by impressions of mind. The

human passions mix in every station, action, trial and enjoyment. They excite or depress the vigour of life."

How important, then, is the *anatomy* of mind! How much more important, is the wise *government* of it! It soothes affliction, diminishes pain, aids and adds to, the force of medicine.

The joy inspired by a prize in the lottery, or an unexpected legacy, has destroyed the life; and the fear of danger and of death, has given mortal energy to a fever. Grief has exhausted life, and despair and anger have inflamed the brain, distracted reason, and dissolved the union of soul and body. Who then can calculate the importance of this subject to the medical man, the minister of the gospel, the attendants on sick bodies and distressed minds! "A cheerful heart doth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit, drieth the bones."

"HOPE is a stimulating passion, but of the milder kind. Its *effects* are, to excite moderately the strength and powers, both of body and mind, and direct them to their proper objects. No ill effects are apprehended from it. Of all the passions, hope, both as a gentle stimulant and composing sedative, seems, in general, to answer the best purposes, and tends to ensure the compliance of a patient with the rules prescribed."—Dr. Falconer.

Hope is the balm of life, most salutary in its effects on the healthy and the sick. Your sister is very ill, the doctor visits her; and after his departure, she is quite another woman—her spirits revive. She assures you the doctor described her case exactly, has cured several patients under the same disorder, in a short time. Your sister is really better before she has taken any medicine. Hope has given fresh vigour to her heart, new impulse to her languid circulation.

If such be the power of hope, to assist the influence of medicine, and if fear and despair almost destroy its beneficial tendency, then, all hail my BIBLE, "that word on which God has caused me to hope."

Let the SAVIOUR, "the hope set before me," in the doctrines, invitations and promises of the gospel, be received in his ability and willingness to save, "to save to the uttermost," and his grace and salvation will calm my fears, and inspire my "expectation of things hoped for."

Let the medical man present the GOSPEL, that system of TRUTH and MERCY," and WISDOM, which God, "the God of Hope,"

himself reveals to fallen man, instead of a system of lies, which may ruin a soul and embarrass a family. Say not your patient is better when he is worse, or that there is no danger, when you fear the worst; but direct him to God through a Mediator, who is "the refuge and strength, and very present help in trouble," to "all who call upon him in truth."

Let the medical man study the word of God, and "learn to speak a word in season to him that is weary," from the burden of sin, the presence of affliction, the force of temptation, the influence of nervous affections, and the fear of death. Let him not attempt to "calm the surges of the soul," by philosophy, by mere moral persuasion, by nourishing self-conceit for comparative goodness. Rather let him direct the confidence of the sufferer to the promises of pardon, peace, and eternal life. These received in faith will relieve the conscience, cheer the heart, reconcile the mind to the dispensations of God, and prevent, but never produce, the delirium which is often falsely ascribed to religion, when it only proves the existence of a false religion, or the absence of the religion of Christ.

Your's faithfully,

JOHN COOKE.

LETTER LXXXI.—TO A MINISTER UNKNOWN.

(*On Satan's Vigilance.*)

My dear Brother,

You say if you knew what hour the tempter would come, you would *watch*. Watch, *because* you *know not* the hour. This is our Lord's counsel.

The tempter comes when the *suitable opportunity* presents—when Eve is *near* the *forbidden fruit*, *alone!* In the *absence of Adam!* When business urges to omit duty; or company invites to commit sin. When disappointment discomposes the mind, and a sinful relief can be suddenly proposed. When relatives plead for indulgence, or offer objections to present duty. If unduly elated by the pleasing occurrence, or depressed by a painful event, Satan is near.

Let Providence be obscure, or the temper ruffled, and behold "the evil one;" if exempt from trials, like David on the house top; or self-confident, like Peter; if halting between duty and sin, or fallen and concerned to return; when high in spiritual enjoyment, or indulging self-complacency after it, then "the tempter comes!" Under conviction of sin, he tempts to despair or delay; under affliction, to impatience, and when delivered, to presumption. Are you persecuted like Elijah?—Or Nehemiah?—He bids you flee. Are you offended? Resent it in passion; and you "give place to the devil!"

In a new relation, Satan tempts you to expect too much, and yield too little. In a new station or office, to overrate your talents, and underrate the abilities of others. If friends flatter, he swells you with vanity; if enemies detract from your character, he inflames with resentment. When excited to liberality, he calls it extravagance; when extravagant, he names it generosity. When you reprove in pride, he says it is faithfulness; when you are reproved, it is pride or unkindness in the reprover. If your minister is faithful, he is personal; if cheerful, he is trifling; if serious, he is dull; if practical, he is legal; if he preaches grace, he is an enemy to good works. If he be social, he is worldly; if very studious, he is unsocial. If he is forgiving when misrepresented, he is guilty, or he would resent it; if he should speak, he is resentful. If he pleads for his rights, he is covetous; if he is passive, he is weak. If he is courteous, he is afraid of man; if courageous, he is rude. If his language be piercing, he is coarse; if plain, he is illiterate; if elevated, he is too high in his style. These are some of "the devices of Satan;" the crooked windings of "the serpent."

If you preach a few fashionable truths, you are prudent; if "the whole counsel of God," you are injudicious. Preach *duty*, and Satan recommends Christ. Preach Christ, and he commends duty. Here he is "transformed into an angel of light!" If you are careful to believe, he bids you perform good works; and if solicitous to do your duty, he bids you only believe.

Whenever you find a suggestion which opposes privilege and duty to each other, it is not of God, it is Satan "perverting the real gospel," and substituting "another Gospel."

Your's faithfully,

J. COOKE.

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